

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*My understanding of the primary mission of the church is the proclamation of Jesus Christ the incarnate Son of God come down to earth to save mankind from sin for goodness, from death for eternal life, from isolation for communion with God and one another in Jesus and in no other social or political way other than Jesus.*

*Jesus and the gospels have been invoked to promote earthly endeavors, some questionable and others perhaps demonic: climate change, reproductive rights, sexual orientation, income redistribution, immigration. Mercy is often invoked to nullify the need to reject sin in order to be in communion with God.*

*Synods and councils seem to be like navel gazing looking at the organization and its structures rather than how to deliver the message of Jesus: that He forgives sins while counseling not to commit them again, that He died and took our sins on the cross so that we be free of them, that He is transforming our thoughts to be His thoughts, our desires to be His desires, our wills to conform to His will so that when He comes again, Jesus will be able to cloak us with a resurrected body which will allow the soul that is holy and transformed to enter beyond the veil where He went upon His resurrection.*

*That is what I wish to hear from the church; that is what I preach.*

*Certainly we faithful need some application to daily living, to politics when necessary (rather than constantly which seems to be the case for enough church leaders), for people to act justly and mercifully toward one another because we believe in Jesus' true presence in the Holy Eucharist which transforms us and empowers us to be just and merciful.*

*Salvation in Jesus is what I hear more from evangelical believers. In my Catholic church I hear more internal gazing at itself, its structures, how to follow the culture rather than to lead the culture and the world to Christ.*

*Enough government and non governmental organizations give their voice to earthly endeavors, good and bad.*

*If Holy Church is to be faithful to her mission to proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified for our sins without compromise, she will suffer loss of some members, her prestige, her wealth. What she will do is to recover her beauty which will attract believers to Word and Sacrament.*

*Below are two cautions for synods which can be navel gazing and which may be manipulated to follow the world.*

- **Archbishop Charles Chaput complains that “instead of being occasions for an honest exchange of ideas,” the two synod assemblies he attended, in 2015 and 2018, suffered from “manipulation. . .exercises of power rather than efforts to arrive honestly at a common position.”**

- **Bishop Georg Batzing of Limburg, president of the German bishops’ conference, acknowledged criticism of “us Germans and the way we do things” but insisted he and his colleagues had to be out front in seeking ways to “prevent the gap between the gospel and the respective culture from becoming ever wider.”**

- **The author, Russell Shaw comments *Thinking like this has of course accompanied, and arguably furthered, the precipitous decline of liberal Protestantism for years.***

*The gap will continue to widen if the church is not giving Jesus to the world, rather bringing the confusion of the world into the church. Holy Church is sacrificing the salvific power given to her by Jesus when she tries to unite with the culture rather than to transform it with the gospel.*

- **the Catholic population [in Germany] fell by nearly 273,000. Against this background, the bishops in collaboration with a lay group called the Central Committee of German Catholics have been pursuing a “reform” project called the Synodal Path that focuses on things like priestly celibacy, sexual morality, LGBTQ+ issues, and the role of women.**

*The Church in the US is not much better in what it seems to be preaching from official levels. Let’s hope priests and faithful Catholics stay on message rather than trying to apply the Holy Name to justify structures and social projects. I believe that if we are faithful to the message and name of Jesus, the Catholic Church will be a beacon of light that draws people to the Savior and to His salvation.*

## Concerning “Synodality”

*Russell Shaw*

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In October next year an assembly of the Synod of Bishops will convene at the Vatican to discuss the whys and hows of a “synodal” Church. Although a synod on synods may at first sound excruciatingly dull, the bishops will be weighing a matter with huge implications for the future of Catholicism.

Before proceeding too far down what German Catholic leaders have recently been touting as the “synodal path,” therefore, we would be wise to pause and consider whether synodality, as Pope Francis believes, is just what the doctor ordered for the Church or a poison pill in the making. For now, at least, the truthful answer is: It all depends.

The word “synod” comes from two Greek words, “sun” (with) and “hodos” (path). A synodal church is one that conducts its affairs in a participatory manner grounded in an appreciation for its own nature as a communion of believers. The International Theological Commission traces synodality all the way back to the so-called Council of Jerusalem, described in the Acts of the Apostles, at which “apostles and elders” of the Jerusalem church discussed what to require of non-Jewish converts.

In the centuries since then, regional and diocesan synods have often been held. Synods are important to the ecclesiology of Eastern Christianity, and the Council of Trent decreed that diocesan synods be held annually and provincial synods every three years to carry forward the implementation of its decrees. Soon after his election, Pope St. John XXIII announced that his

three great projects would be an ecumenical council, a revised Code of Canon Law – and a synod for the Diocese of Rome.

Even so, the dominant operational model for the Church in modern times hasn't been synodality but centralization of authority – in the pope for the universal Church, in diocesan bishops for the local churches. Where the papacy is concerned, the definitive statement is Vatican Council I's dogmatic constitution *Pastor Aeternus*, on papal primacy and infallibility, which declares the pope's jurisdiction to be universal, ordinary, and immediate. Yet even *Pastor Aeternus* concedes that papal primacy is “far from standing in the way” of the bishops in exercising the authority that is proper to them.

Vatican Council II repeated Vatican I's teaching on papal primacy, but it also stressed that **the authority of bishops is not delegated to them by the Bishop of Rome, but comes to them directly from Christ.** The Council also enunciated the principle of episcopal collegiality.

Vatican II doesn't speak of synods or synodality as such. But the International Theological Commission (in a document on synodality published in 2018) concludes that the Council laid a groundwork by presenting the Church as the People of God and gave synodality a boost in its decree on bishops, directing ordinaries to establish senates or councils of priests and recommending diocesan pastoral councils with lay members.

As the Council drew to a close, Pope St. Paul VI announced the creation of a permanent Synod of Bishops for the universal Church, but so far its assemblies have had mixed results. In his forthcoming book *Things Worth Dying For* <sup>[1]</sup>, **Archbishop Charles Chaput complains that “instead of being occasions for an honest exchange of ideas,” the two synod assemblies he attended, in 2015 and 2018, suffered from “manipulation. . .exercises of power rather than efforts to arrive honestly at a common position.”**

Writing last year, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, made a point that next year's synod of bishops should underline. Synodality, he wrote, is of two different kinds – the synodality of bishops as teachers and pastors, and the synodality of the Christian community, which can be a help to the decision-makers, but must not infringe on their authority.

**Which brings us to the Germans' experiment in synodality, which threatens to become (if it isn't already) synodality gone off the tracks.**

The Christian churches in Germany have been losing thousands of members annually for years. In 2019 alone, the Catholic population fell by nearly 273,000. Against this background, the bishops in collaboration with a lay group called the Central Committee of German Catholics have been pursuing a "reform" project called the Synodal Path that focuses on things like priestly celibacy, sexual morality, LGBTQ+ issues, and the role of women.

In an interview last year with a German Catholic magazine, **Bishop Georg Batzing of Limburg, president of the German bishops' conference, acknowledged criticism of "us Germans and the way we do things" but insisted he and his colleagues had to be out front in seeking ways to "prevent the gap between the gospel and the respective culture from becoming ever wider."**

**Thinking like this has of course accompanied, and arguably furthered, the precipitous decline of liberal Protestantism for years.**

At its best, then, the synodal model is what one writer calls the Church "hitting on all cylinders." The International Theological Commission declares it to be "the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church" as a community of faith whose members "journey together, gather in assembly, and take an active part in her evangelizing mission." But the commission also

sounds this cautionary note: “There is always a danger of schism lying in wait, which cannot be shrugged off.”

So is synodality what the doctor ordered or a poison pill? In fact, it could be either, depending on those who are involved in a synodal process, how they understand their role, and how much or little respect they show for the Catholic tradition.

If we are now to tread the synodal path, let it be with cautious hope but hopeful caution.

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