

Fr. Perozich comments —

I have encouraged priests and laity to participate in synods, even when I believed that the final results were already written, or that a very few comments will be extracted to be the foundation to declare what the people of god [not GOD] have discerned from some spirit in which they are imbued, [not the HOLY SPIRIT.] Faithful Catholics need to express, record and have their discernments submitted to synod authorities.

I look at synodal leaders and their comments. Fr. Thomas Rosica was part of the leadership. He kept proclaiming all things homosexual. Cardinal Hollerich is the relator for the next synod; he proclaims all things homosexual. Cardinal Marx and Cupich proclaim an appeal to conscience for homosexual behavior. Bishop Stowe proclaims all things homosexual

Other bishops proclaim vaccines as safe, effective, moral, calls for solar panels, inclusion of all living “units” as family, communion for those in intimate unions outside of Holy Matrimony, assisting illegal entry into countries, not evangelizing Jews or Moslems, socialism as social justice, care for the earth, but not care for the soul, earthly utopia and reasonable expectation that all will be saved and go to heaven.

Their teachings filter to the pew Catholics who then are formed by this “spirit” which is not the Holy Spirit.

The egalitarian democracy of ideas, that mine is just as good as yours, are inserted into the synods which may be precisely the ideas that leaders will glean to proclaim what the “people of god” want, but not what the Son of God proclaims.

Two woman, albeit a small sample, from the San Diego synod a few years ago, complained that one of the priests chosen in leadership in the synod, told them it was too late to include their comments, ideas which did not go along with the spirit of the age.

This same priest offered the clergy vapid speakers at the yearly mandatory diocesan convocation, even bringing in a prominent master general of an order who was proclaiming homosexual rights, bringing that priest not only to the convocation, but to the University of San Diego, to his own parish, and to other venues.

Synodality can have value, but only if it is based in the truth of the Bible and Tradition of the church rather than the modern appeals to the authority of Rome (ultramontaniam) on every issue and the desires of the heart of the participants based on the spirit of the age.

Larry Clapp demonstrates problems with the church which will spill over into problems in synodality. Who is the spirit to whom Catholics this day are listening, the spirit of the age or the Holy Spirit of God?

The quintessentially modern approach to “synodality” is empty and artificial

Will the Church still be a “listening” Church in ten years or will the “Spirit” go mute once the Germans have given the final definitive word on the Spirit’s intentions?

April 28, 2022 Larry Chapp
Print



Cardinals and bishops attend the closing Mass of the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment, in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Oct. 28, 2018. (CNS photo/Claudio Peri, pool via Reuters)

I am not opposed to a more “synodal” Church. In fact, **I would welcome any move away from the cult of the modern hyper-papacy that views the pontiff as an Oracle of Delphi on the Tiber who must be in control of every aspect of the Church’s life.** There is ample evidence of this hypertrophy of the papacy, but for a recent example one can look at *Traditionis Custodes*, which contained legislation regulating when and where the TLM can be advertised in parish bulletins!

I am all in favor of the Petrine ministry in the Church, but **I highly doubt that Christ intended the rock of the papacy to act like a helicopter parent swooping in to regulate every last detail of parish life.** More importantly, I do not think Christ intended for the rock of the Petrine ministry to wield power as Caesar does, and with the same claims of universal omnicompetence.

Nevertheless, I have serious reservations about the current bureaucratic gesticulations toward “synodality” in the Church. As far as I can tell **they are rather empty gestures filled with the usual modern technocratic, therapeutic linguistics of faux egalitarian tyranny.** Nothing is more quintessentially modern than the bureaucratic impulse to micromanage through mimicry of putatively “democratic” procedures; **autocratic ends are achieved by first creating a “process” rooted in “structures”—followed by the infiltrating of those processes and structures in advance with the approved apparatchiks.**

And once certain conclusions via “decision consensus” have been reached, the “democratic moment” ends, and all

must now offer a pinch of incense to the Caesar of the “process” and its conclusions—conclusions that were reached long before the “process” even began, and which were the *raison d’être* for the creation of the entire hamster wheel in the first place. And **it is my fear that this process is exactly what we are seeing in the “synodal way,” which has been accompanied by all of the anodyne buzzwords and marketing banalities that one sees in similar secular operations.**

Some might say that this is alarmist hyperbole, and that synodality is meant to increase the Church’s “accountability” precisely by devolving “power” to more local entities. I am all for that—in theory. Therefore, if that really is the aim then just do it and **stop the charade about a “listening Church” with its thoroughly unsystematic and unscientific questionnaires that are designed to give back to their creators exactly what they wanted to hear in the first place.** Most of the respondents to these questionnaires are going to be self-selected Catholic activists of both the Right and the Left, and/or the usual five percent of parishioners who will dutifully show up for a parish meeting if that is what the pastor wants. And such folks are in no way going to be representative of the vast swaths of bored and desultory Catholics who couldn’t care less about such procedural, intramural affairs.

And who will be collecting and analyzing these questionnaires? The same ecclesiastical elites who composed them? And will they be made public? And will

there be full transparency throughout the process? **Will any reasoned and sincere dissent from the alleged consensus be allowed? Will the “conversation” continue? Or will it end once the desired results are reached?** Will the Church still be a “listening” Church in ten years or **will the “Spirit” go mute once the Germans have given the final definitive word on the Spirit’s intentions?**

One’s suspicions in this regard only increase when looking at the last “questionnaire” from Rome, which was sent to the bishops to discern their attitude toward *Summorum Pontificum*, the results of which were used as justification for *Traditionis Custodes*. But **Rome never released the results of the survey and played the “episcopal privacy” card as its reason for avoiding transparency.** So we are left with just taking Rome’s word that a majority of bishops were greatly displeased with *Summorum* and wanted it reversed.

It stretches credulity therefore to think that a “synodal” Church is going to be formed via a papacy that often lacks transparency, uses the very anti-synodal fiat of the *motu proprio* format more than any previous pope, and which is basing the synodal way on thoroughly useless, unscientific questionnaires as indicators of where the “Spirit” is blowing. **There are also no criteria established (so far) for a proper discernment of spirits in the light of the Gospel, opening the entire process up to the importation of the idols of the age, all under the banner of “listening.”** **Parishioners are encouraged to share their**

experiences of the “Holy Spirit” speaking to them, but apparently without any true formation or spiritual guidance as to whether the “spirit” speaking to them is indeed the Trinitarian one.

And what of this “listening”? Listening to what or to whom exactly? Listening to everyone? That is impossible, and so the real question arises: what are the hermeneutical guideposts for all this listening? But so far, the “process” has not given us any explicit guideposts, just vague words about inclusion and about our questions smelling like sheep or something. My father is going deaf but still manages somehow to hear what he wants to hear. **“Selective listening”** is what my mother calls it. The same thing here. **What we have is a Church long accustomed to “listening” to the faintest murmurings of the bourgeois zeitgeist of secular Euro-America and yet one which then feigns deafness when the victims of its spiritual insouciance are screaming from the rafters for attention.**

And I am not just speaking here of the victims of sexual abuse, although they would be exhibit “A”. After all, a Church that can’t hear a mother say to a bishop, “Fr. Skippy raped my son” is not a Church I trust to “listen” to the synodal muse. I am also speaking of all those long-suffering Catholics who have been pleading with the Church for decades now to increase its evangelical witness, to improve its liturgies, its homilies, its devotion to the poor, and its opposition to bourgeois culture with its militarism and rapacious capitalism. A Church that has

not “listened” for the past fifty years even to the voice of Saint Pope John Paul or Pope Benedict, and which set its face against them in deeply ingrained institutional ways, is not a Church that I think is truly open to suddenly “listening” to the real voice of the Holy Spirit just because the governing processes will be more multi-focal. **Multi-focal selective listening is still selective listening, and that kind of listening will continue so long as the root spiritual causes of the Church’s cultivated, sedulous mediocrity are ignored.**

Finally, this sudden epiphanic realization of **the need to “listen” seems strangely allied with the resurgence of interest in Vatican II as an “event” that was the catalyst for a “process” that is ever new and ongoing—over and against the view of the Council put forward by the previous two popes as something both new and yet rooted firmly in the Tradition.** More on that in a future installment, but suffice it to say for now that I do not trust the “listening” of prelates “schooled” by Bologna.

I understand that there are folks out there—sane and reasonable folks—who think a more synodal Church would be a good thing. I think they are right. But I doubt *this* is it. Furthermore, there is also a grave danger in such ecclesial navel-staring at her own “structures” that sociologisms will replace theological moorings. And, further, that an exaggerated fixation on the Church’s authority as an end in itself will emerge and create ideological deformations of what such authority is for in the first place: the promotion of holiness, rooted in the communion of trinitarian life,

communicated to us in Christ, and lived in the communion of the saints both on earth and in Heaven.

True synodality would, I think, aid this kind of communion ecclesiology. But a “synodality” rooted in a false egalitarianism and a vulgarly democratic, Montanist pneumaticism (and which thereby misuses the “People of God” metaphor), is a non-starter in my book. (More on that in my next essay.)

Fr. Louis Bouyer (1913-2004), in a prescient passage in *The Church of God* that reads like it was written yesterday, warns against such fixations on “authority” as an end in itself, for they lead to the deformations mentioned above:

Especially over the last centuries, pastoral authority has tended to be isolated from both the preaching of the faith and the celebration of the mysteries. It is not that these two elements disappeared from the Catholic Church, but to too great an extent, instead of acting in symbiosis with them, the exercise of authority has tended to be its own end, causing the proclamation of evangelical truth and the liturgical life to suffer harmful distortion, and has altered itself at the same time. ... Instead of being subordinate to the truth to be proclaimed to the world, ... authority having made itself its own goal, has oppressed this common life by exaggerated justification of itself, thereby reducing (or at least threatening to reduce) the sacramental liturgy to an ornament of its power.

Bouyer is obviously not criticizing synodalism here nor would he oppose a genuine synodalism. But **he does highlight the dangers of a fixation on authority structures, the chief of which is the disconnection that emerges between ecclesial authority and the divine life that putatively is its goal.**

And it highlights for me the central question that needs to be addressed regarding all the current talk of “synodality”. Namely, **what is the relationship between the magisterium’s authority and its credibility?** And if it lacks the latter, how can it properly exercise the former? Indeed, if it lacks credibility, how does it stop its authority from devolving into mere “power” in a worldly and coercive sense?

And if there is a sharp division and a widening gap between episcopal authority and episcopal credibility, in what possible sense can it matter whether that authority is wielded centrally from Rome, or more synodally on a local level? I highly doubt that the credibility of the papacy is of a lower status than that of various episcopal conferences, and diktats issued from Cardinal Marx or Cardinal Cupich are every bit as disincarnate and as abstracted for most Catholics as the latest missive from the Vatican. It is still just authority turtles all the way down and **when those authorities lack a visceral, existential credibility, their lucubrations are equally irrelevant regardless of whether they are issued from Rome or Chicago.**

If you value the news and views Catholic World Report provides, please consider donating to support our efforts. Your contribution will help us

continue to make CWR available to all readers worldwide for free, without a subscription. Thank you for your generosity!

Click here for more information on donating to CWR. Click here to sign up for our newsletter.