

Fr. Perozich comments —

The article below shows non catholic christian ecclesial communities in the process of their own synod style reflection.

To me the difference between the Catholic version of synod and the Protestant versions of synodality are striking.

The Catholic church is looking to what people desire in this life for their own comfort, security, control, power based on their life experience.

Protestant pastors are looking at what holds people back from a deeper relationship with God based on the Bible.

Catholic pastors often seem to be gray and gay. They control the process, possibly with a predetermined document, while voices of younger faithful clergy and faithful participants are silenced or ignored.

The gray and gay narrative is what is being reported and promoted from synods to include sinful behavior and non biblical teachings, directing people away from God toward worldly views and idols.

*“Gray” Protestant pastors see few problems, while their younger clergy, whose opinions **are** allowed to be expressed, have insights both into their congregations and a desire to direct people to God away from idols.*

The fullness of truth subsists in the Catholic Church as do Word, Sacrament, and true charity, even if the emphases on these might be stifled by some leaders. So I can go nowhere else for Christ.

Still the clear insight of some Protestant leaders can give me what leaders in the Catholic Church of 2022 might be suppressing in favor of idols, while Protestant leaders identify the idols which get in the way of the relationship with God.

Man’s time on earth is short compared to the eternity wherein he should be working with Jesus to be transformed into the divine image rather than to attain power, possessions, and prestige, to reject sin rather than accompany sinners in their sin, to live the gospel according to God’s revelation in Sacred Scripture and Tradition rather than to change God’s word to fit man’s desires for power, possessions, pleasure, and prestige.

The current synod is way off course in helping Christians to live out God’s truth. It is right on course with the world as if man’s time here were all that there is.

Live in Jesus for eternity.

Synodality and the perennial temptations of power, pleasure, and wealth

When we look at the issues that dominate the conversation around ecclesial life, we see that so often they relate to matters of authority in the Church, of sexuality, and the Church's relationship to money.

[October 19, 2022 Nicholas Senz Print](#)



A program for a Mass opening the synod process in the Diocese of Camden, N.J., is seen at St. Agnes Church of Our Lady of Hope Parish in Blackwood, N.J., Oct. 17, 2021. (CNS photo/Dave Hernandez, Catholic Star Herald)

If one looks back on the Synods of Bishops during the pontificate of Pope Francis, and the controversies that have accompanied them, one can

notice that even with such disparate themes as the family, youth, the Amazon, and synodality, many of **the same topics have arisen again and again: divorce and remarriage, contraception, LGBTQ issues; the role of the laity in church governance, the ordination of women and married men; the role of the laity in Church governance, especially in gaining control over Church finances and property.** That these same issues have bubbled up again and again is, oddly, both surprising, and not surprising at all.

It is surprising because **it's often difficult to see why some of these issues would be the most pressing,** or even related to the main theme at all. Out of all the challenges facing families today, is communion for the divorced and remarried the most urgent? Are Catholics in the Amazon really clamoring for clerical celibacy to be optional? When we try to discern what it means to be a synodal Church, is the appointment of women as cardinals a top priority?

Yet it is not surprising because **all of these issues, at a fundamental level, boil down to three essential desires that are constants in our battle to set aside the self and to love God: the desires for power, pleasure, and wealth.**

These three desires cut to the very core of us. Power relates to the will, to our ability to do what we wish. Wealth and pleasure relate to the intellect and passions. What do we desire? What do we think is the good for which we ought to strive?

Thus, when we look at the issues that dominate the conversation around ecclesial life, we see that so often they relate to matters of authority in the Church, of sexuality, and the Church's relationship to money—in other words, to power, pleasure, and wealth.

These are not new struggles. Look at the history of lay investiture and lay trusteeism. Look at the canons of ecumenical councils back to the beginning decrying clerical concubinage, or bishops having themselves appointed ordinary of several dioceses and living in and serving none, yet gladly collecting the benefices and church taxes. It's the temptation to power, pleasure, and wealth, all the way down.

Consider the Garden of Eden. What are Adam and Eve tempted with? The fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit looks good for eating (pleasure), and they wish to possess it (wealth) so that they can be like God (power).

Consider Jesus' temptation in the desert, the beginning of His recapitulation of human history. The devil tempts Jesus with these same

categories of temptation we face: turning stones to bread (pleasure), compelling God to do as Jesus wishes (power), and possessing all the kingdoms of the world (wealth).

Consider what Jesus exhorts us to by the evangelical counsels. Jesus calls us to leave all things behind and follow Him, embracing poverty, which combats the desire for wealth. Jesus calls us to be chaste, to not even look upon another with lust in our hearts and to become “eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom” if that is our call; this chastity combats the desire for pleasure. And Jesus calls us to take up our crosses and follow Him, imitating the obedience He gives to the Father—this obedience combats the desire for power.

The Church recognizes this pattern, and invites us during the season of Lent, when we attempt with greater ardor to turn away from sin, to practices which combat these basic temptations. Prayer builds us up in obedience to God’s will, which negates the desire for power. Fasting turns our hearts away from physical goods and is a kind of chastity, which negates the desire for pleasure. Almsgiving makes us focus on others’ needs rather than our own wants, embracing poverty, which negates the desire for wealth.

The Gospel message is the call to be freed from these temptations through the grace of Jesus Christ. That message so often has a hard time being heard in the world because it challenges us in those precise areas that we find so difficult to turn over to God. These temptations will always be with us, in some form or other, because our fallen human nature is so vulnerable to them. They prey upon our weakened will, darkened intellect, and disordered passions.

Every age faces these challenges, yet each in its own way. The Church of today does not face the challenge of kings attempting to appoint bishops, but it does wrestle with the problem proposed by lay governing boards making themselves equal to the bishops. The Church does not see quite so many examples of priests taking secret wives, but it is still dealing with the self-inflicted wound of sexual abuse and cover-up committed by clergy. The abbots of Monte Cassino no longer live opulent lives, but dying German dioceses seem to be more concerned with the *Kirchensteuer* than their plummeting numbers.

Now, to give maximal benefit of the doubt, some of the more radical proposals we see are said to be attempts to combat precisely these problems of power, pleasure, and wealth. Perhaps fewer candidates with abusive

inclinations would make it into the priesthood if the field of candidates were widened (in the Western rite) to include married men (or women, as some more radical proposals have it). Perhaps bishops could not so easily cover up abuse if they were subject in some way to their flocks. Perhaps the Church would be less concerned with holding on to its institutional wealth if the bishops did not have sole authority over its finances.

One can debate or reject the propriety or orthodoxy of some or all of these suggestions. But it is curious to see that even those on opposite sides of the ecclesiological spectrum seem, perhaps unwittingly, to identify the same root causes of the Church's problems: the desire for power, pleasure, and wealth. No doubt each side would accuse the other of capitulating to these desires in their own way. But if we are to find any path ahead other than ecclesial cold war, we need common ground.

Bearing this in mind, when looking ahead to the worldwide phase of the Synod on Synodality, perhaps we should look upon the more controversial proposals put forward by some as an unintentional diagnosis. Such proposals identify the ways in which many today, including many Catholics, struggle to overcome these temptations to power, pleasure, and wealth, or perhaps fail to see them as temptations at all. In hearing why the Gospel is not deemed credible by some, the Church can better attune its call so that it might be heard. That is the opportunity before us. Let us pray it is an opportunity seized.

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*Previously sent article
relating to this new one.*

Pastors Name 8 'Idols' Holding Churchgoers

Back from Deeper Relationships with God

08-15-2022

Tré Goins-Phillips, Faithwire



(Photo by Jon Tyson/Unsplash)

In the book of Exodus, the Israelites — impatiently waiting for Moses as he spoke with God — began to worship a golden calf. While today’s idols aren’t as easily recognizable, they are just as dangerous and destructive as the carved images that distracted the God-followers of the Old Testament.

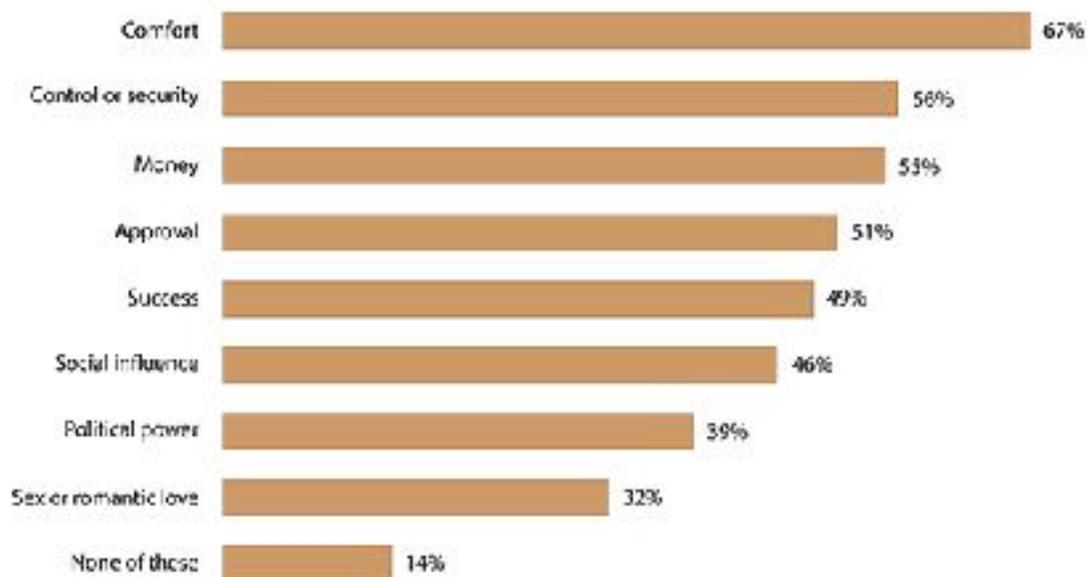
At the top of the list of the idols believers struggle with today is “**comfort**” (67%), according to [new data](#) released by LifeWay Research, which surveyed 1,000 Protestant pastors in September of last year.

More than half of U.S. Protestant pastors believe comfort (67%), control or security (56%), money (55%) and approval (51%) are idols that have significant influence on their congregations.

<http://lfwy.co/yyE650KiTKY>

What modern-day idols have significant influence in U.S. churches?

Among U.S. Protestant pastors



*Note: Respondents could select all that apply.

Lifeway research

Source: Lifeway Research phone survey of 1,000 U.S. Protestant pastors conducted Sept. 1-25, 2021

In total, the pastors surveyed for the study identified eight idols that distract Christians from the Lord.

“It’s easy to think that those in Christian churches have chosen their God and are faithful to Him,” said LifeWay Research Director Scott McConnell. “However, pastors quickly acknowledge how divided their congregations’ allegiances can be. **These gods don’t have a physical shine, but they compete for the hearts of Christians.**”

Following closely behind believers’ desire for comfort is the idolization of “control or security” (56%).

Other common idols are “money” (55%), “approval” (51%), “success” (49%), “social influence” (46%), “political power” (39%), and “sex or romantic love” (32%), according to the study.

Interestingly, the [just-published data](#) from LifeWay Research reveals **younger pastors are seemingly more concerned than older pastors about worldly idols competing with prioritizing God:**

The younger pastors are, the more likely they are to see money as a rival object of worship. Pastors ages 18-44 (63%) and 45-54 (58%) are more likely to say money is an idol in their churches than pastors 65 and older (46%).

Furthermore, older pastors are less likely to identify any of these potential idols among their congregants. Pastors ages 55-64 (18%) and over 64 (19%) are more likely to say none of these are idols in their churches than pastors 18-44 (9%) or 45-54 (10%).

McConnell admitted the study’s researchers did not isolate a “definitive” reason for the difference between younger and older pastors and their respective perception of idols.

“There are signs that younger pastors are of the mindset that idols are rampant today, whereas older pastors may be slower to classify one of these as having significant influence on their people, or they may define idols more narrowly,” he said.

The director also noted a common thread among the top three idols — “comfort,” “control and security,” and “money” — with which believers struggle.

“Comfort and security draw the hearts of the most congregations, but they are often enabled by the pursuit of more money,” McConnell explained. “Pastors of higher socioeconomic levels are quicker to recognize the influence of security and control while pastors of lower socioeconomic levels more readily see the draw of comforts.”

On the latest episode of CBN’s “Faith vs. Culture,” show co-hosts Dan Andros, Billy Hallowell, and Tré Goins-Phillips explored the modern-day idols that distract Christians and how to ensure God remains the No. 1 priority.

You can watch that discussion below:

[CBN News](#)

Faith vs. Culture - Modern Day Idols