

# A Self-Destructive Synod

By [Fr. Gerald E. Murray](#) OCTOBER 31, 2022

The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops issued the *Working Document (WD)* for the Continental Stage of the *Synod for a Synodal Church* last week. **It unapologetically calls into question various Catholic doctrines under the guise of listening to the Holy Spirit who, remarkably, is somehow speaking through the complaints and criticisms of those who reject what the Church teaches and has always taught.**

**Contributions from around the world that contradict Catholic doctrine are cited or summarized with approval because “they express in a particularly powerful, beautiful or precise way sentiments expressed more generally in many reports.”** (¶6) Those sentiments enjoy the presumption of Spirit-inspired truth while doctrines cause alienation and sorrow.

Remarks from an American parish group are emblematic: “The vision of a Church capable of radical inclusion, shared belonging, and deep hospitality according to the teachings of Jesus is at the heart of the synodal process: *‘Instead of behaving like gatekeepers trying to exclude others from the table, we need to do more to make sure that people know that everyone can find a place and a home here.’*” (¶31) The *WD* further explains that “[t]he synodal experience can be read as a path of recognition for those who do not feel sufficiently recognized in the Church.” (¶32)

So who feels excluded? “Among those who ask for a more meaningful dialogue and a more welcoming space we also find those who, for various reasons, feel a tension between belonging to the Church and their own loving relationships, such as: remarried divorcees, single parents, people living in a polygamous marriage, LGBTQ people, etc.” (¶39) This even gets a second mention: “Many summaries also give voice to the pain of not being able to access the

Sacraments experienced by remarried divorcees and those who have entered into polygamous marriages. There is no unanimity on how to deal with these situations” (§94)

Who else is complaining? “After careful listening, many reports ask that the Church continue its discernment in relation to a range of specific questions: the active role of women in the governing structures of Church bodies, the possibility for women with adequate training to preach in parish settings, and a female diaconate. Much greater diversity of opinion was expressed on the subject of priestly ordination for women, which some reports call for, while others consider a closed issue.” (§64)

**The solution? “[The] conversion of the Church’s culture, for the salvation of the world, is linked in concrete terms to the possibility of establishing a new culture, with new practices and structures.” (§60)**

So how do we get there? “[W]alking together as the People of God requires us to recognize the need for continual conversion, individual and communal. On the institutional and pastoral level, this conversion translates into an equally continuous reform of the Church, its structures and style, in the wake of the drive for continuous ‘aggiornamento’...” (§101)

**The teaching of the Church, given to her by Christ, is the problem. The Church is being asked to seriously discuss discarding teachings that contradict the beliefs and desires of :**

- those living in adulterous second “marriages,”**
- men who have two or three or more wives,**
- homosexuals and bisexuals**
- people who believe they are not the sex they were born as**
- women who want to be ordained deacons and priests,**
- lay people who want the authority given by God to bishops and priests.**

**Does anything here strengthen or promote fidelity to Christ's teachings? Of course not. It's about changing the Church.**



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Someone from the UK made the most pertinent comment in the entire document: *“I distrust the Synod. I think it has been called to bring about further change to Christ’s teachings and wound his Church further.”* (§18)

In the next phase of this self-destructive social process – the Continental Assemblies scheduled for early 2023 – the world’s bishops are instructed that :

all Assemblies be ecclesial and not merely episcopal, ensuring that their composition adequately represents the variety of the People of God: bishops, presbyters, deacons, consecrated women and men, laymen and women. . . .it is important to pay special

attention to the presence of women and young people (laymen and laywomen, consecrated men and women in formation, seminarians); people living in conditions of poverty or marginalization, and those who have direct contact with these groups and persons; fraternal delegates from other Christian denominations; representatives of other religions and faith traditions; and some people with no religious affiliation. (§108)

**Given this list, the bishops will be a minority.**

**And their role? “[T]hey are asked to identify appropriate ways to carry out their task of *validating and approving* the Final Document, ensuring that it is the fruit of an authentically synodal journey, respectful of the process that has taken place and faithful to the diverse voices of the People of God in each continent.” (§108) (*Emphasis added*)**

**In other words, bishops are to function as recording secretaries. They’re not advised to ensure the fidelity of the assembly to Church teaching.**

**The *WD* calls for the Church to operate with “transparency.” (§79) A good place to begin would be for the Synod Secretariat to publish all the written submissions received. Did any, for instance, lament: the loss of faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist; the lack of priestly vocations in the developed world; the steep decline in Mass attendance, baptisms, and church weddings; the scandal of bishops and cardinals repeatedly contradicting Church teaching in public; the loss of Catholic faithful to evangelical churches; the collapse of the Catholic school system in the developed world; the widespread phenomenon of liturgical abuses while the celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass is harshly curtailed or even forbidden; the collapse of religious orders due to secularization and the rejection of doctrinal fidelity and ascetical living.**

**There is plainly an open revolution going on in the Church today, an attempt to convince us that an embrace of heresy and immorality is not sinful, but rather a response to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through people who feel**

**marginalized by a Church that has, up to now, been unfaithful to its mission.**

The *WD* states: “To use a biblical image, one could say that the synodal journey marked the first steps of the return from an experience of collective exile, the consequences of which affect the entire People of God: if the Church is not synodal, no one can really feel fully at home.” (§24)

Let’s pray that the Synod Fathers, and all the bishops, will stand up and defend the Church’s teaching and practice against this Vatican-sponsored exercise in self-destructive behavior. Souls are at stake.

**\*Image:** *The Eve of the Deluge* by William Bell Scott, 1865 [The Tate, London]. A “debauched eastern prince and his court with Noah and his family who, only too aware of the significance of the ominous cloud in the sky, are entering the Ark.”

You may also enjoy:

**Robert Royal’s *Who Needs Synodality?***

**Stephen P. White’s *Synodality Is What You Make of It***

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