

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*Distinctions and ingredients from a recipe rather than word salad and admixture of everything help the Christian to discover the truth of God.*

*In the first article, tolerance and welcome are presented correctly from the beginning of the church's self understanding and mission, over and against new demands that every idea and behavior be accepted and tolerated.*

*In the second article, the purpose of the synod on synodality shows itself to be a radical change from Jesus and His Church. The leadership has finally gotten all their players in place, and is able to exert its will over the truth of Christ.*

*Will faithful Catholics feel welcome or tolerated in their churches after the impositions from the synod on synodality?*

## **The Church, true tolerance, and the meaning of “welcome”**

*Those seeking to become members of the Church should fully understand what they are attempting to enter, and that this will never truly be obtained while they remain attached to sin.*

June 20, 2023 Rev. Kenneth M. Dos Santos, MIC

Print



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It's a common belief in modern day society that all organizations be inclusive of everyone. **The thought that one's personal beliefs—and the behavior one chooses to engage in—should be accepted by everyone in the name of tolerance and inclusivity—regardless of whether this behavior coincides with natural law, morality, or religion—only furthers an ideological belief that natural law, morality, and religion have little to offer society and the public realm.**

**This belief has brought into current favor—through the increased secularization of thought—the active pursuit of lobbyists, politicians, and those who harbor agendas, to enact into “law” that which would “protect” the marginalized, or, those they perceive as being marginalized. Governments, institutions, and associations are being forced to accept, include, and welcome those who would live outside the “confines” of natural law,**

morality, and religious belief. **Further, this belief imposes upon society the limiting of personal freedoms.**

### **True tolerance**

St. Thomas Aquinas speaks about these principles within the *Summa Theologica*:

Human government is derived from the Divine government, and should imitate it. Now although God is all-powerful and supremely good, nevertheless He allows certain evils to take place in the universe, which He might prevent, lest, without them, greater goods might be forfeited, or greater evils ensue. Accordingly in human government also, those who are in authority, rightly tolerate certain evils, lest certain goods be lost, or certain greater evils be incurred....

Hence, though unbelievers sin in their rites, they may be tolerated, either on account of some good that ensues therefrom, or because of some evil avoided. Thus, from the fact that the Jews observe their rites, which, of old, foreshadowed the truth of the faith which we hold, there follows this good—that our very enemies bear witness to our faith, and that our faith is represented in a figure, so to speak. For this reason, they are tolerated in the observance of their rites.

On the other hand, the rites of other unbelievers, which are neither truthful nor profitable are by no means to be tolerated, except perchance in order to avoid an evil, e.g., the scandal or disturbance that might ensue, or some hindrance to the salvation of those who if they were unmolested might gradually be converted to the faith. For this reason, the Church, at times, has

tolerated the rites even of heretics and pagans, when unbelievers were very numerous.”<sup>i</sup>

Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, confirms this thought, while offering additional considerations, within his book: *Moods and Truths*:

There is no other subject on which the average mind is so much confused as the subject of tolerance and intolerance. Tolerance is always supposed to be desirable because it is taken to be synonymous with broadmindedness. Intolerance is always supposed to be undesirable, because it is taken to be synonymous with narrow-mindedness. This is not true, for tolerance and intolerance apply to two totally different things. **Tolerance applies only to persons, but never to principles. Intolerance applies only to principles, but never to persons. We must be tolerant to persons because they are human; we must be intolerant about principles because they are divine.** We must be tolerant to the erring, because ignorance may have led them astray; but we must be intolerant to the error, because Truth is not our making, but God’s. And hence the Church in her history, due reparation made, has always welcomed the heretic back into the treasury of her souls, but never his heresy into the treasury of her wisdom.<sup>ii</sup>

The dominant point here, is that **Truth is not of our making, but God’s.** Thus, it is not narrow-mindedness, nor is it a bad thing, that Christians remain “intolerant” concerning any attempt by individuals, societies, or governments to subvert the Truth, that is, ignore the natural law, Divine Law, or the founding principles established and granted us by God. On the other hand,

we must “tolerate” the sinner, we must forgive all of the offenses committed against us, instructing and admonishing all who have erred—with love, according to the teachings of the Church and the Gospel Truth]—that she “welcome” *back into the treasury of her souls*, those who were lost in error. While, at the same time, remaining always vigilant in the refusal to accept—the error *into the treasury of [the Church’s] wisdom*.

### **Justice and the common good**

Therefore, what principles must be set firmly in place that a Christian abide by man-made laws? It has been established that human government, or law, has been derived from Divine Government or God’s Law. And, we are aware, in accordance with this reality, that all created law should be predicated upon the principles of justice and what serves the common good. St. Thomas affirms this:

**Laws framed by man are either just or unjust.** If they be just, they have the power of binding in conscience, from the eternal law whence they are derived, according to (cf. Proverbs 8:15): *By Me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things*. Now laws are said to be just, both from the end, when, to wit, they are ordained to the common good,—and from their author, that is to say, when the law that is made does not exceed the power of the lawgiver,—and from their form, when, to wit, burdens are laid on the subjects, according to an equality of proportion and with a view to the common good. For, since one man is a part of the community, each man in all that he is and has, belongs to the community; just as a part, in all that it is, belongs to the whole; wherefore nature inflicts a loss on the part, in order to save the whole: so that on this account, such laws as these, which impose

proportionate burdens, are just and binding in conscience, and are legal laws.

On the other hand laws may be unjust in two ways: first, by being contrary to human good, through being opposed to the things mentioned above:—either in respect of the end, as when an authority imposes on his subjects burdensome laws, conducive, not to the common good, but rather to his own cupidity or vainglory;—or in respect of the author, as when a man makes a law that goes beyond the power committed to him;—or in respect of the form, as when burdens are imposed unequally on the community, although with a view to the common good. The like are acts of violence rather than laws; because, as Augustine says (cf. *De Lib. Arb.* i, 5), a law that is not just, seems to be no law at all.<sup>iii</sup>

**Man-made laws must remain rooted in Divine Law,** in order that these laws be just. And, if a man-made law does not conform to this principle, it is not in favor of the common good. Nor are laws just when men seek to enact laws *that go beyond the power committed to them*, for example, laws which seek to legitimize and justify abortion, the so-called “right” which would seek to empower a man or woman to end the life of another human being. No man or woman possesses this “right”—only God—the Creator and Sustainer of all things possesses a “right” over human life. Other laws that run contrary to Divine Law are those that would seek to codify civil unions, transgenderism, or any attempt to eliminate gender altogether. These laws are *acts of violence rather than laws*; they are destructive and run contrary to the Truth, the dignity and true good of the human person. They do not serve to bring men and women closer to God and the

promise of Eternal life. Therefore, *a law that is not just, seems to be no law at all.*

**Thus, if individuals, governments, and societies have mitigated their ability to acknowledge the natural law, the moral code, and Judeo-Christian values, through the omission or commission of personal sin, which blinds one from recognizing sin for what it is—how is it even feasible to recognize this behavior as destructive, disordered, and sinful?**

**And, how is it possible for any organization, recognize these basic and founding principles, to welcome into the fold those who have no intention of putting an end to their sinful and destructive behavior?** They who would entreat these same organizations, through the force of unjust legislation, to “welcome” them and their sinful behavior into the organization; because a failure to do so could appear outdated, exclusive, narrow-minded, intolerant, and even hateful.

### **The meaning of “welcome”**

Here we must consider the different ways in which the word “welcome” can be used. The Collins Dictionary defines the word “welcome” as a transitive verb: “If you welcome someone, you greet them in a friendly way when they arrive somewhere.”<sup>iv</sup> In this sense of the word, Catholics and Christians can certainly “welcome” those who are not of their faith, those who choose to live outside of the teachings of organized religion.

**Yet, once this “warm greeting” is extended to those who have no intention of living out the teachings and**

**founding principles of the organization, one would have to ponder the long-lasting purpose of the encounter. Are they resolved to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, living as He instructed His followers to live, that they be raised up by Him to Eternal life? What is the motivation behind their seeking out those who represent the organization for this warm greeting? Are they merely seeking out a “warm greeting” alone, or is something additional being sought out?**

Hence, it is helpful to consider how the word “welcome” is used as an adjective: “If you say that someone is welcome in a particular place, you are encouraging them to go there by telling them that they will be liked and accepted.” And, “If you tell someone that they are welcome to do something, you are encouraging them to do it by telling them that they are allowed to do it.”<sup>vi</sup> In this sense of the word, **no perpetually sinful lifestyle is “welcome” in a Christian organization. Here, a particular individual is seeking to be “welcomed” into the organization, while he persists in errant and sinful behavior. This is clearly against the Truth [which] is not [of] our making, but God’s, a reality far above the mere opinion of a single individual.**

St. Thomas addresses this also in the *Summa Theologica*:

For this reason the Church not only admits to Penance those who return from heresy for the first time, but also safeguards their lives, and sometimes by dispensation, restores them to the ecclesiastical dignities which they may have had before, should their conversion appear to be sincere: we read of this as having frequently been done for the good of peace. But when they fall again, after having been received, this seems to prove them to be



inconstant in faith, wherefore when they return again, they are admitted to Penance, but are not delivered from the pain of death.<sup>vii</sup>

Here we see, **upon one's return to the Church, an errant or sinful individual must be admitted to *Penance*, the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Then, the individual will have been provided an opportunity to humble himself, acknowledge that his behavior was both sinful and errant, internalize true remorse for his transgression, and implore the Lord for His forgiveness.** Following this, through the cooperation of the priest, the individual receives absolution, and grace is imparted to the penitent. And, that his conversion remain constant and sincere, he must renounce his sinful behavior, avail himself of the grace of the sacraments, and possess gratitude for the forgiveness received. **This will enable the individual to persist in faith.**

Surely one can see the wisdom of “welcoming” members into an organization, who not only desire to receive a warm reception, but also seek to live out the instructions and teachings of that organization. Because, the good that the organization was founded to provide, is best served when its members live out its instructions and teachings.

A helpful example to illustrate this concept is found in the everyday life of a family. As a family, the parents can certainly invite relatives and friends to their home for the birthday party of one of their children. Once the guests arrive, the family can extend a warm “welcome” to those who have accepted their invitation. But, as the guests enter the home, some of them could make the choice to engage in inappropriate, destructive, and sinful behavior

in the presence of children. And, if this were the case, would these guests continue to be “welcome” in the family’s home? Would not the parents who own this home be justified in expecting a certain decorum and appropriate behavior concerning the birthday party of a child at the home of a family? Would not the parents of these children confront the guests who engaged in this destructive behavior, requesting that they depart immediately from the party? Would this not be undertaken for the true good of everyone present, including those who are engaged in destructive behavior? And, following this incident, how ready would this family be to “welcome” these particular guests into their home again, without the benefit of an apology, or an assurance that this type of behavior will not be engaged in again, in the presence of young and elderly alike?

Here we must realize, the family has the right to “welcome” whomever they wish into their home. But, is it really *the family* in this example who establishes the ideal of what decent and appropriate behavior is in its true essence? The family can certainly discern the behavior of their guests and decide what they are willing to allow in their home, but what should they use as an example of decent and appropriate behavior—as they compare appropriate behavior to destructive behavior? One would have to conclude it is the natural law, Divine Law, and the moral code, which govern what decent and appropriate behavior is in its essence, and this should be reflected in man-made or positive laws. Thus, the natural law, Divine Law, and the moral code, exist in and of themselves, that is, whether or not the family chooses to acknowledge them. Or whether or not, man-made or positive laws take into account their existence, they exist nonetheless.

### **The ultimate purpose of the Church**

What ramifications does this pose for the Catholic Church? The Catholic Church is a unique case as organizations go, in that the Church is a religious organization, living and enlivened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, God Himself. Therefore, the Church is guided by the One Living and True God. And, as it has been stated above: *Truth is not [of] our making, but God's*. This is not to say that Truth is something God created, just as He created the earth and all that is in it, but that—He is—Truth Itself.

**Therefore, the Truth is not something man can change, man must come to recognize Truth for what and Who it is, and realize that God has existence outside of ourselves.** The natural law, Divine Law, and the moral code, have been given us by God to help us to flourish, as a loving father guides his son in a manner that ensures his safety and true good.

Is this restrictive in terms of personal freedom? In a certain sense, yes; but what is the end or purpose for setting these boundaries? A father sets these boundaries for his son because he loves him and desires to see him attain happiness. Furthermore, there are many parents who do not set boundaries for their children. These children appear to go about their lives with relative freedom. But, is this a state healthy for a child, or for that matter an adult? It is not. The child ends up believing that his parents do not care about him or about what happens to him. However, the child will encounter these boundaries nonetheless, as he befriends other children who do have parents that set boundaries for their children, or later in life when he disregards the man-made or positive laws which make up the fabric of society. The fact is, these limits or boundaries assist us in living out our lives and help us to attain true happiness: “For whom the LORD loves he reproveth, as a father, the son he favors.”<sup>viii</sup>

**Thus, does the fact that the Catholic Church expects its laws, precepts, and Commandments, be followed—necessarily mean that it should be viewed as “unwelcoming” to those who live outside of them? No, all men and women are “welcome” to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and following in the footsteps of Christ has many implications concerning the manner in which one lives out one’s life. Here, one has to consider the overarching purpose of the foundation of the Church, that is, its intent—to prepare its members for union with God in Eternal Life.**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church summarizes this in paragraphs 830-831:

The word ‘catholic’ means ‘universal,’ in the sense of ‘according to the totality’ or ‘in keeping with the whole.’ The Church is catholic in a double sense: **First, the Church is catholic because Christ is present in her. ‘Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church’** (cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn.* 8, 2: Apostolic Fathers, II/2, 311). In her subsists the fullness of Christ’s body united with its head; this implies that she receives from him ‘the fullness of the means of salvation’ (cf. *UR* 3; *AG* 6; *Eph* 1:22-23) which he has willed: **correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession. The Church was, in this fundamental sense, catholic on the day of Pentecost (cf. *AG* 4) and will always be so until the day of the Parousia.**

**Secondly, the Church is catholic because she has been sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole of the human race (cf. *Mt* 28:19): All men are called to belong**

**to the new People of God.** This People, therefore, while remaining one and only one, is to be spread throughout the whole world and to all ages in order that the design of God's will may be fulfilled: he made human nature one in the beginning and has decreed that all his children who were scattered should be finally gathered together as one.... The character of universality which adorns the People of God is a gift from the Lord himself whereby the Catholic Church ceaselessly and efficaciously seeks for the return of all humanity and all its goods, under Christ the Head in the unity of his Spirit" (cf. *LG* 13 §§ 1-2; cf. *Jn* 11:52).<sup>ix</sup>

The first point here is that *the Church is catholic because Christ is present in her*—a living breathing entity sustained and nourished by Him—now, for all time, and in the Eternal life to come. And, it is—in Christ—***that she receives from him 'the fullness of the means of salvation.'*** It is beyond the powers of man to attain Eternal life, we receive this gift from the only One Who can grant it, God Himself.

The second point is that the ***Church is sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole of the human race.*** Does this not suggest that all are invited and given the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Christ; both those who carry the Gospel message to the ends of the earth, and those who will hear the message, repent, and experience a conversion? All men and women of faith and good will experience both the sufferings which are a part of this life, and the eternal joy we hope to receive when we enter into eternal union with God in Heaven. **All are made one in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and there cannot be true unity with others, or with God, when there are persistent sinners who seek to be perspective or full members of**

**the Church, as they persist in sinful and destructive behavior.**

This is surely not in keeping with the reason the Church was founded, nor will it ever foster unity with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. **Out of love, we are called to seek out those who have strayed from Gospel Truth and the teachings of the Church. But, this cannot and should not result in a one-sided pursuit. Those seeking to become members of the Church should fully understand what they are attempting to enter, and that this will never truly be obtained while they remain attached to sin.**

Thus, let us internalize these words of St. Augustine:

The shepherd seeks out the straying sheep, but because they have wandered away and are lost, they say that they are not ours. 'Why do you want us? Why do you seek us?' they ask, as if their straying and being lost were not the very reason for our wanting them and seeking them out. 'If I am straying,' he says, 'if I am lost, why do you want me?' You are straying, that is why I wish to recall you. You have been lost; I wish to find you. 'But I wish to stray,' he says; 'I wish to be lost.'

So, you wish to stray and be lost? How much better that I do not also wish this. Certainly, I dare say, I am unwelcome. But I listen to the Apostle who says: *Preach the word; insist upon it, welcome and unwelcome.* Welcome to whom? Unwelcome to whom? By all means welcome to those who desire it; unwelcome to those who do not. However unwelcome, I dare to say: 'You wish to stray, you wish to be lost; but I do not want this.' For the one whom I fear does not wish this. And should I wish it, consider his

words of reproach: *The straying sheep you have not recalled; the lost sheep you have not sought. Shall I fear you rather than him? Remember, we must all present ourselves before the judgment seat of Christ*” (cf. *Sermo* 46, 14-15: CCL 41, 541-542).<sup>x</sup>

### **Endnotes:**

**i** Thomas, and Dominican Province, *Summa Theologica: First Complete American Edition in Three Volumes* (New York: Benziger, 1947), ST II-II, q. 10, a. 11., (hereafter cited as Thomas).

**ii** Sheen, Fulton J., 1932. *Moods and Truths*. New York: Century., pg. 163-164.

**iii** Thomas, ST I-II, q. 96, a. 4.

**iv** Collins English Dictionary, 13th ed., s.v. **“welcome (tv),”** accessed January 31, 2023.

**v** Ibid., **“welcome (adj),”** accessed January 31, 2023.

**vi** Ibid., **“welcome (adj),”** accessed January 31, 2023.

**vii** Thomas, ST II-II, q. 11, a. 4.

**viii** Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Catholic Church, *Saint Joseph Edition of the New American Bible* (Washington, D.C. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Totowa, NJ: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 2011), Prov. 3:12.

**ix** Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church : Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope*

*John Paul II.* 2nd ed. Vatican City Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; United States Catholic Conference, 1997., 830-831.

✕ Catholic Church and Franciscans. 1975-1976. *The Divine Office : The Liturgy of the Hours According to the Roman Rite : As Renewed by Decree of the Second Vatican Council and Promulgated by the Authority of Pope Paul.* Volume IV. New York: Catholic Book Pub., pg. 290.

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### **About Rev. Kenneth M. Dos Santos, MIC [1 Article](#)**

**Rev. Kenneth M. Dos Santos, MIC**, is a member of the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception and was ordained a priest in 2010. He is currently serving as Provincial Secretary for the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy Province, located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He holds a BA in Philosophy from Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, and an MDiv from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC.



# Major Synod on Synodality document highlights need to 'welcome' polygamists, 'LGBTQ+ people'

*The Instrumentum Laboris is set to guide discussions between all the participants at the October Synod of Bishops, and presents numerous non-Catholic talking points.*



*Cdl. Hollerich presenting the Instrumentum Laboris, June 20, 2023.*

Michael Haynes



VATICAN CITY ([LifeSiteNews](#)) – The key document which will guide the October meeting of bishops in the [Synod on Synodality](#) highlights topics such as women’s diaconal “ordination,” married priests, and a need to “welcome” the “remarried divorcees, people in polygamous marriages, LGBTQ+ people.”

Issued at a press conference June 20, the *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL) or [working document](#), is particularly lengthy: with a 10,000 word foreward and a further 17,000 words in the worksheets, which contain the themes for discussion at the upcoming synodal meeting.

As noted today by Cardinal Mario Grech – Secretary General of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops – the document is born out of the various local and continental stages of the Synod which have taken place since October 2021. The text is the “fruit of this listening process,” Grech said.

**He downplayed suggestions that the results of the Synod have already been written, stating that the synodal process is about “respecting the Holy Spirit” who is the “protagonist” of the process.** The text presents the “fruit of a Church experience of a journey in which we have all

learnt more by the mere fact of journeying together,” argued Grech.

Drawing from *Lumen Gentium*, the document states how it specifically “strives to avoid divisive language in the hope of furthering better understanding among members of the Synodal Assembly who come from different regions or traditions,” and that “the vision of Vatican II is the shared point of reference.”

### **READ: Pope claims Vatican II was ‘renewal’ of the Church ‘in tune with the signs of the times’**

The theme of Synodality as the only future for the Church is heavily presented in the IL, and Grech noted the wide-reaching aspect of Synodality, stating that the IL is “not a document of the Holy See but of the whole Church. It’s not a document written at a desk, but one in which we are all co-authors.”

The text, as confirmed by Cdl. Hollerich, has been seen and assented to by Pope Francis.

## **What does it say?**

The document, argued relator general of the Synod, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, is not a “tentative answer to all questions about synodality” but “a result of the synodal process on all level, which leads to many questions, which could receive answers by the participants of the synods of bishops.”

Indeed, the IL is a tale of two parts: firstly, it is prefaced by a lengthy foreward and secondly it contains the “worksheets” which are divided into three chief sections and questions – questions which are based on the three themes of “communion, mission, participation.” These worksheets form the key action points from

the document, and “can be used for in-depth thematic meetings in a synodal style at all levels of Church life.” They have been specifically designed “to facilitate discernment on the three ‘priorities that most strongly emerge from the work of all the continents’ (no. 14), with a view to identifying the concrete steps to which we feel called by the Holy Spirit in order to grow as a synodal Church.”

**READ: [Vatican’s Synod on Synodality will consult non-Catholics, lapsed Catholics](#)**

Furthering the aspect of being in two parts, the document is a peculiar mix of actual content, along with copious amounts of classic bureaucratic phraseology, presenting an even further confused message as to the purpose and meaning of the document and upcoming meetings.

**What is notable, however, is the promotion of elements appearing in firm opposition to Catholic doctrine, with a number of commentators noting that the document reads as if composed in order to appease the “liberal” elements of the Church.**



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## Catholic or not?

“How can we grow in communion, welcoming everybody, while remaining faithful to the Gospel?” Such was the question raised by Hollerich in presenting the new text. However, the IL contains several passages which throw into considerable doubt the ability of the text, and the Synod, to remain faithful to the Gospel.

**READ: EXCLUSIVE: Bp. Schneider says Synod on Synodality serves up ‘spiritual poisons’ to the faithful**

Notably, the IL appears to present the widely accepted, and Papally approved, interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia* allowing the divorced and “re-married” to Holy Communion as an already finalized issue. The document states:

Some of the questions that emerged from the consultation of the People of God concern issues on which there is already magisterial and theological teaching to be considered. To give just two examples, we can note the acceptance of remarried divorcees, dealt with in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, or the inculturation of the liturgy, the subject of the Instruction *Varietates legitimae* (1994) of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The fact that questions continue to emerge on issues like these should not be hastily dismissed, rather, it calls for discernment, and the Synodal Assembly is a privileged forum for so doing.

The IL makes mention of “obstacles, real or perceived, that have prevented the steps indicated by previous documents from being realised” which “should be considered and reflections offered on how they can be removed.”

## **READ: Vatican preparing document for couples living in ‘new unions’ after ‘marriage failure’**

Such methodology was displayed for use in occasions in which “reality” has changed. Given the proximity of this passage to the promotion of *Amoris laetitia*’s heterodoxy, the IL appears to be advocating for a change in teaching – which is reflected in subsequent lines:

Another instance could be the reappearance of a question which emerges as a sign of a changed reality or situations where there is a need for an “overflow” of Grace. This requires further reflection on the Deposit of Faith and the living Tradition of the Church.

Some of the questions that emerged from the consultation of the People of God concern issues on which there is already magisterial and theological teaching to be considered. To give just two examples, we can note the acceptance of remarried divorcees, dealt with in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, or the inculturation of the liturgy, the subject of the Instruction *Varietates legittimae* (1954) of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The fact that questions continue to emerge on issues like these should not be hastily dismissed; rather, it calls for discernment, and the Synodal Assembly is a privileged forum for so doing. In particular, the obstacles, real or perceived, that have prevented the steps indicated by previous documents from being realised should be considered and reflections offered on how they can be removed. For example, if the block stems from a general lack of information, then improved communication will be needed. If, on the other hand, the problem stems from the difficulty of grasping the implications of the documents in ordinary situations or an inability of persons to recognise themselves in what is proposed, a synodal journey of effective reception by the People of God could be the appropriate response. Another instance could be the reappearance of a question which emerges as a sign of a changed reality or situations where there is a need for an “overflow” of Grace. This requires further reflection on the Deposit of Faith and the living Tradition of the Church.

Screenshot of the IL

## **‘LGBT+’ and role of women**

Receiving particular attention in the document was the topic of women, and their role in the Church. Sister Nadia Coppa, president of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), praised how “the hierarchical style has been overcome” in the Church.

Such a situation appears set to continue should the IL's discussion points be effected. Mention was made of "structural failures affecting the lives of women in the Church," along with how "the desire for a greater presence of women in positions of responsibility and governance emerged as crucial elements in the search for more synodal ways to live the Church's mission."

**READ: Synod aims to turn Church upside down so that 'sheep become the shepherds': SSPX Superior General**

In light of this, the IL presented questions for the participants of the October Synod, which included:

- How can women be included in these areas [governance, decision-making, mission and ministries at all levels of the Church] in greater numbers and new ways?
- Most of the Continental Assemblies and the syntheses of several Episcopal Conferences call for the question of women's inclusion in the diaconate to be considered. Is it possible to envisage this, and in what way?

Additionally identified as in need of receiving a "genuine welcome," are a number of groups already **identified** by the Synod process so far, including "the divorced and remarried, people in polygamous marriages, or LGBTQ+ Catholics."



The desire to offer genuine welcome is a sentiment expressed by synod participants across diverse contexts:

- a) the final documents of the Continental Assemblies often mention those who do not feel accepted in the Church, such as the divorced and remarried, people in polygamous marriages, or LGBTQ+ Catholics;
- b) they also note how racial, tribal, ethnic, class or caste-based discrimination, also present in the People of God, leads some to feel less important or welcome in the community;
- c) there are widespread reports of a variety of practical and cultural barriers that exclude persons with disabilities, which must be overcome;
- d) concern also emerges that the places to which the Good News is primarily addressed are too often on the margins of Christian communities (for example, migrants and refugees, street children, homeless persons, victims of human trafficking, and others);
- e) the documents of the Continental Assemblies note that it is necessary to maintain the link between synodal conversion and care for survivors of abuse and those marginalised within the Church. The Continental Assemblies place great emphasis on learning to exercise justice as a form of care for those who have been wounded by members of the Church, especially victims and survivors of all forms of abuse.
- f) listening to the most neglected voices is identified as the way to grow in the love and justice to which the Gospel calls us.

## Screenshot of the Instrumentum Laboris

As a result, the IL presented the question about how further welcome could be offered to those who “feel hurt by the Church and unwelcomed by the community” in order that they might “feel recognized, received, free to ask questions and not judged.”

In the light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, what concrete steps are needed to welcome those who feel excluded from the Church because of their status or sexuality (for example, remarried divorcees, people in polygamous marriages, LGBTQ+ people, etc.)?

**What steps can a synodal Church take to imitate ever more closely its Master and Lord, who walks with all in unconditional love and proclaims the fullness of the Gospel truth?**

**Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection**

- 1) What is the attitude with which we approach the world? Do we know to recognise what is good and, at the same time, commit ourselves to prophetically denounce all that violates the dignity of persons, human communities and creation?
- 2) How can we speak in a prophetic voice to expose what is evil without further fragmenting our communities? How can we become a Church that deals honestly with its conflicts and is not afraid to safeguard spaces for disagreement?
- 3) How can we restore proximity and caring relationships as the core of the Church's mission, "walking with people instead of talking about them or solely at them"?
- 4) In the spirit of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, how can we walk together with young people? How can a "preferential option for young people" be at the centre of our pastoral strategies and synodal life?
- 5) How can we continue to take meaningful and concrete steps to offer justice to victims and survivors of sexual abuse and spiritual, economic, power and conscience abuse by persons who were carrying out a ministry or ecclesial responsibility?
- 6) How can we create spaces where those who feel hurt by the Church and unwelcomed by the community feel recognised, received, free to ask questions and not judged? In the light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, what concrete steps are needed to welcome those who feel excluded from the Church because of their status or sexuality (for example, remarried divorcees, people in polygamous marriages, LGBTIQ+ people, etc.)?
- 7) How can we be more open and welcoming towards migrants and refugees, ethnic and cultural minorities, and indigenous communities who have long been part of the Church but are often on the margins? How can the Church better embrace their presence as a gift?
- 8) What physical and cultural barriers do we need to break down so that people with disabilities can feel that they are full members of the community?
- 9) How can we enhance the contribution of older people to the life of the Christian community and society?

## Screenshot of the Instrumentum Laboris

Cardinals Hollerich and Grech were asked about this, and whether Church teaching on sexuality would be changed in order to effect this "welcome." In response, Hollerich stated that the document and the Synod was about "walking together," and that Catholics must be "ready to welcome people."

For his part, Cardinal Grech stated that "at times we are really judgmental. Let us leave the judgement to the Lord."

LifeSite also submitted a question to the panel what such welcoming of LGBT people would practically, given that an active LGBT lifestyle runs contrary to the Gospel. No response to the question was given.



Cdl. Grech presenting the new Synodal document

## **Clerical reordering and married priests**

Not ignored by the document is the topic of bishops, priests, and seminarians – with all levels of the Church’s hierarchy to be touched by the Synodal process.

As has become commonplace in such documents, the IL repeatedly highlighted the ministry of the faithful, noting that “the most fruitful place to realize the participation of all in the Christ’s Priesthood, simultaneously valuing baptismal Ministries and the particularity of ordained Ministry, is the local church.”

**READ: Bp. Athanasius Schneider appeals to Pope to revoke lay voting rights before Synod on Synodality**

Increased “synodal work” could lead to clarifying the “complementarity between common Priesthood and the ministerial Priesthood,” noted the document, which continued:

an all-ministerial Church is not necessarily wholly a Church of instituted Ministries...Growing as a synodal Church involves the commitment to discern together which ministries should be created or promoted in the light of the signs of the times in service to the world.

While noting its “clear appreciation for the gift of the ministerial Priesthood,” the document stated how the Synod process also had a “deep desire for its renewal in a synodal perspective.” In order to effect such a synodal “renewal,” it appears as though the entire clerical structure would be re-organized in light of such a goal.

**READ: Cdl. Burke questions validity of upcoming Synod: ‘There is no clear idea of what synodality is’**

Seminary formation and theological training in schools was to be reformed, while the role of lay ministries raised to be complementary and equal to the ordained ministry.

Additionally, the question was raised about the possibility of married priests: “As some continents propose, could a reflection be opened concerning the discipline on access to the Priesthood for married men, at least in some areas?”

Indeed, while expanding on how bishops should act and be evaluated on how his actions are performed in a “synodal style,” the document hinted at changes to the manner of papal authority.

One discussion question raised read: “How should the role of the Bishop of Rome and the exercise of his primacy evolve in a synodal Church?”

## **WARNING: ‘Spiritual Poisons’ Stemming from Pope Francis’ Synod on Synodality**

### **Where to now with the document?**

The length of the document may be as much its undoing as its secret weapon. Its length will no doubt put off many from paying close attention to it or lending it much credence or importance. However, it is that same length which allows the document to promote renewed calls for anti-Catholic elements which have become a signal mark of the Synodal process.

While previously, leading Synodal authorities have excused themselves from the charge of promoting such anti-Catholic topics – arguing that such issues were merely the results of the “listening” continental stages – those same figures are now presenting these questions to the world’s bishops for discussion in October.

Earlier this year, the Synod’s “listening” stage was declared to be over. Given this, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Synod leadership is now actively promoting the plethora of non-Catholic action points of its own volition.

**READ: Pope Francis to personally select lay men, women to form up to 25% of Synodal vote**

As it stands, the IL released today will form the guide for the discussions held in Rome during the October meeting of the

Synod of Bishops, held October 4 to 29. Participants for this meeting have not yet been announced, although more details are expected by late June or early July.

What is already known is that in a break with tradition, Pope Francis is to select lay men and lay women to participate in the Synod of Bishops, who will be given up to 25 percent of the assembly's voting rights. The Secretariat for the Synod [argued](#) that the "episcopal specificity of the Synodal Assembly is not affected, but even confirmed," although Francis had to revise his own constitution governing the Synod of Bishops in order to do so.