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## **The Synod, Just Once More, for Now**

*Robert Royal Monday, July 10, 2023*

As we've seen in previous synods, they can be subtly, and not so subtly, rigged. Our American bishops nominated moderates as delegates: Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop Broglio, Bishops Barron, Rhoades, and Flores. This week, Pope Francis chose Cardinals Cupich, McElroy, Gregory, and O'Malley (Tobin participates as one of the synod organizers), and Fr. James Martin, S.J. And Victor Manuel Fernández, ghostwriter of *Amoris Laetitia*, whom he also named to head the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith – a confusing but reliable Argentinian gatekeeper.

Some people have begun arguing that this is all a quarrel among self-important *pezzi grossi* [big pieces/players], activists, and ideologues – irrelevant to their lives. And that it's far more important to put energy into staying faithful and confronting the sharp threats to Catholics everywhere – especially since the Vatican seems to have little interest in helping them do so. Anyone might be forgiven for turning away from the whole self-referential mess of the Synod on Synodality and let what happens, happen. Which it's likely to do anyway, no matter what people on the inside or outside, do or say.

For many people, that's the right choice. The Synod is already winding itself up over things like “welcoming” people, particularly LGBTQ+s who will largely never turn to the Church, welcoming notwithstanding. Meanwhile, **faithful Catholics in every developed country are facing aggressive proselytizing by LGBTQ+ activists who have captured the “commanding heights of the culture,” as the Soviets used to say.** And are regularly called “haters” of sexual minorities and women seeking abortions.

It's already the case almost everywhere that **Catholic parents who want to transmit the Faith to their children**

**must be extremely vigilant before sending them to a public school, library, or social event.** Teachers, librarians, and public officials – once the bluenoses of the community – are radical now, egged on by professional associations, colleges and universities, the media and Hollywood – the “best people.”

So far, **the Synod seems utterly oblivious to this radical assault, and many others.** Which is why this site will be trying to tell a few home truths here and in Rome as the story unfolds in October, however long are the odds that it will make any difference.

Because the LGBTQ+ juggernaut is only the point of the spear. As Joseph Ratzinger had already explained in the first pages of his brilliant 1968 *[Introduction to Christianity](#)* <sup>[1]</sup>, **these – and many other problems we face – are the logical results of a much deeper historical process by which Western culture turned away from revealed religion, thinking it possible to preserve Christian values in a more rational, less superstitious form, like Deism.**

When that proved thin stuff, the culture quickly gave way to a kind of rationalism only interested in “facts” about nature, which, it briefly seemed, could replace nature’s God as a guide to life. Facts, however, are inert. By definition, they lack the value and meaning that humans need. **So a kind of generalized, human-created progressivism, constantly discarding the “limitations” of the past had to emerge, and with it, belief in what Ratzinger called “a ‘political theology’ as a medium for changing the world.”**

**If the synod were serious about how to better convey the Faith to this brave new world, it would be talking about the need for a massive effort at Catholic education. Only the Catholic tradition has the resources to respond to the disastrous worldview that, as Bishop Barron never tires of saying, is the primary reason young people say they find the Faith no longer credible.**

And in addition to Catholic education on the scale with which the (original) Jesuits largely blunted the Protestant Reformation, **we need a retooling of missionary orders.** Jesus told the disciples: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*” **The synod is already talking a lot about “mission,” but mostly that means “listening,” not teaching.**

**What we need, instead, is to shed the largely imaginary fear of “proselytizing.” And to forget apologies for alleged colonialism and imperialism.** Whatever missteps occurred in the past, they were adequately repudiated long ago. Dredging them up now is a mere diversionary tactic. **Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life – the Savior who sets us free. If you can’t proclaim that without apology or equivocation, what’s the point of walking together?**

People are not stupid. When the early martyrs chose to die for the Faith, or Christians braved threats to care for the most vulnerable from conception to natural death, or revolutionized sex and marriage, they clearly believed what they said. And that confidence in the truth made others follow.

The Jesuit magazine *America* – probably thanks to Fr. James Martin, S.J. – took out large, expensive ads in *The New York Times* recently claiming “The Catholic Church is Changing. You’re going to want to follow along.” *Times* readers should, of course, because “Synodality” has given them the impression that the things they most care about are about to be delivered.

In Rome, they seem to think this sort of thing is innovative outreach, a welcoming missionary effort to *Times* readers. It’s really a sign that **the Church is starting to conform to “woke” outlets like the *Times*.**

But a prediction – with God, there’s always hope, just one reason why we’ll stay on this beat. The usual dynamic will leave everyone, in the Church, agitated. **If Pope Francis stays true to form, he’ll dangle potential changes, but provide them only partially or ambiguously, leaving all sides even more frustrated and divided.**

As in the past, he may have to. The *synodalistas* have been claiming that opposition basically comes from “conservative circles” in America. But we’ll see, when the delegates from “the peripheries,” who are not bewitched by the developed world’s fixation on being “woke,” are asked what they think.

**They might even raise the prophetic voice of the God of surprises.**

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[1] *Introduction to Christianity*: [https://www.amazon.com/Introduction-To-Christianity-2nd-Edition/dp/BoBHFBFHBF/r\\_e\\_f=s\\_r\\_1\\_1?crid=2IBD7EZHRMGOX&keywords=introduction+to+christianity%2C+2nd+edition&qid=1688911912&sprefix=Introduction+to+Christ%2Caps%2C248&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Introduction-To-Christianity-2nd-Edition/dp/BoBHFBFHBF/r_e_f=s_r_1_1?crid=2IBD7EZHRMGOX&keywords=introduction+to+christianity%2C+2nd+edition&qid=1688911912&sprefix=Introduction+to+Christ%2Caps%2C248&sr=8-1)

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