

‘The Church is not an NGO’: Cardinal Müller says bishops, pope must conform to Christ

At a Pontifical High Mass in Philadelphia, the German cardinal decried the bishops' recent push for synodality and their tendency to submit to the world.



*Cardinal Müller delivering the homily at a Mass on Sunday, November
2, 2025*

Maike Hickson/LifeSiteNews

[Antonino Cambria](#)

PHILADELPHIA ([LifeSiteNews](#)) — Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, in a homily at a packed Solemn Pontifical High Mass on Sunday, slammed the Church hierarchy for conforming to the world instead of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his November 2 homily, **the former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) denounced the bishops' recent push for synodality and their tendency to submit to the world. Müller reminded the faithful that the Church is not a secular NGO meant to create an earthly paradise but is the one Church established by Christ for our eternal salvation; therefore, the bishops, including the Sovereign Pontiff, must conform to the Church's teachings.**

Müller gave his sermon during a Pontifical High Mass, organized by the [International Institute for Culture \(IIC\)](#), which drew hundreds of faithful from across the Keystone state and beyond, including many young Catholics, a few of whom emphasized the beauty of the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) to LifeSiteNews and expressed their desire to see the restrictions on its celebration lifted.

The Church is not an NGO

“The Catholic Church neither is nor may become an NGO, a religious social organization directed to the earthly paradise, which would necessarily fail,” the German cardinal said. **“The Church is not there (to make this world better), but for (making us better) for coming to communion with God.”**

“The Church is a living organism, not an organization made by man,” he added. “The body of Christ lies near Heaven and is the universal savior of mankind. **Man cannot reform the Church or create a new Church, following (his) own desires and ideals.**”

READ: [Cardinal Müller says ‘progressivism,’ not tradition is splitting the Catholic Church](#)

Müller then underscored that **rather than reform or create a new church, it is God's will that the faithful**

reform their lives to conform with the teachings of His Church.

“It is a dream of God to reform and renew us, so that we may become Christians, members of the living body, that is to say, the ecclesial body, through the sacraments, especially the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ,” His Eminence said. “It is not our duty to reform God’s Church, but rather to reform our lives. As St. Paul writes to the [Romans](#), ‘Do not conform yourself to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and easy and perfect.’”



Credit: Maike Hickson

All bishops, including the bishop of Rome, must submit to Christ, not the world

Müller further stressed that **Our Lord is the head of the Church, and therefore all clergy, including the pope, must conform to the Church's teachings.** He reminded the faithful of the true definition of “[synodality](#),” which has been distorted in recent years, namely, to renew the Church in Christ.

READ: [Cardinal Müller: Synod on Synodality an ‘attempt to transform’ Church into ‘secular, worldly institution’](#)

“Christ is the head, and we, the bishops, priests, deacons, including the Bishop of Rome and Successor of St. Peter, are only His servants, for no one can lay the foundation other than the one that is there, namely Jesus Christ,” he said. “And these divine words should be the maxim, the rule.”

“Synodality is not the concept of a new church, but ... only the renewal of the Church of Christ in Jesus Christ,” he added. “The Holy Church, which is a community of faith, hope, and charity, has been built by Christ as a covenantor, as a visible organism, which he continually sustains and uses to communicate truth and grace at home.”

Young Catholics’ devotion to the TLM

The standing-room-only Pontifical High Mass was attended by numerous young adults, who shared with LifeSite several aspects of the Tridentine Mass they appreciate, and each wants to see Pope Leo lift the restrictions on its celebration.



Credit: Maike Hickson

“I absolutely love the traditional Latin Mass, and it’s quite an honor to have a cardinal, especially Cardinal Müller here,” Marc, who traveled from Thomas Aquinas College in Northfield, Massachusetts, told LifeSiteNews. “I loved his homily; it was absolutely beautiful, the choir was beautiful. Everything was awesome about (the Mass).”

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Trisha of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, highlighted some of the beautiful and unique aspects of the Pontifical High Mass that she appreciates much more after having attended several previously, such as the bishop’s use of the pontifical throne. This special seat can only be used by a bishop within his own jurisdiction, and Cardinal Müller, as a cardinal, has jurisdiction over the universal Church.

“Knowing all these (facts) impresses upon you the understanding that every Mass is full of the graces of the holy sacrifice, which is our Lord truly present among the Apostles. But what makes the Pontifical Masses different is their connection with the bishops, their connection with the apostles, and ultimately their connection with the pope and St. Peter.” Joseph of West Chester, Pennsylvania, who typically attends the Anglican Ordinariate Mass, told LifeSite he appreciates that the TLM is more “meditative” and has more silent time for prayer than Masses celebrated in the vernacular.

“I don’t speak Latin. So (the choir is more) like background noise rather than when you can understand them in the vernacular.”

“I’ve been to (many) Anglo-Catholic high liturgies, complex liturgies that are in the vernacular, compared to this Mass, where you’re not ‘participating’ directly in,” he added. “That is why it’s so meditative compared to even Anglo-Catholic or very high liturgies that you can understand (and) you’re participating in that complex liturgy rather than sitting quietly (and) enjoying it.”