

WHY THE SYNOD REMINDS US OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The liminal question about the synod is identical with that which troubled many in the college of cardinals when John XXIII mooted the idea of an ecumenical council sixty years ago. *Where is the need for such a convocation ?* Pope John wanted the Catholic faith made more accessible to the world. He thought the faith should be adjusted, brought up to date : *aggiornamento*. But it was not the Church that needed adjusting ; it was the world.

What does Pope Francis want of this synod ? Why does he need to consult with his fellow bishops about the Church's teachings ? Does a father consult the members of his family about what is for their good ? He is supposed to know it already. The world has grown increasingly dysfunctional and the misconceptions promoted by Vatican II have contributed to that state in no small measure. The solution is not the adjustment, or should one say, *the further adjustment*, of the Church's teachings or practice to the world's shortcomings, but the world's adjustment to the truths expounded by Jesus Christ. And that will only occur when those charged with the care of the Church resume her assigned task of converting the world to the truth.

One can observe much of the paraphernalia of Vatican II in the synod : the seeming unconcern about exposing the delicate matters of the faith to public gaze ; the deference to public opinion, as if it was something important ; the besottedness with democracy and the need to consider every opinion, no matter how harebrained ; the dearth of leadership ; the lack of fidelity and commitment of many of the bishops. The concerns that troubled the orthodox faithful over Vatican II were amply borne out. The same may befall their concerns about this synod.

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Cardinal Kasper urges "a pastoral approach" to provide a solution in the "difficult" cases of divorced and remarried Catholics who wish to receive the Blessed Eucharist in spite of the irregularity of their state. "Church doctrine," he says—

"is not a closed system : the Second Vatican Council teaches us that there is development, meaning that it is possible to look into this further. I wonder if a deeper understanding similar to what we saw in ecclesiology, is possible in this case. Although the Catholic Church is Christ's true Church, there are elements of ecclesiality beyond the institutional boundaries of the Church too. Couldn't some elements of sacramental marriage also be recognized in civil marriages in certain cases... ?"¹

He appeals by way of analogy to the Council's teaching in *Lumen Gentium*—

¹ Interview 18th September 2014 with Andrea Tornielli.

“The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible organisation through which he communicates truth and grace to all men... This Church, constituted and organised as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines...” [n. 8] ²

Kasper sees a distinction between doctrine and pastoral practice, as if bishops and priests could maintain the Church’s teaching at the theoretical level and depart from it at the practical. While doctrine cannot change, in the concrete he argues there are situations in which it cannot be applied. Does this sound familiar? It is the device used by many priests and theologians to gainsay the Church’s teaching against contraception.

Underlying his approach is a fundamental philosophical flaw, a failure to grasp that *do* follows *be*.³ Everything acts for the sake of an end. In the natural order the end is embedded in the (natural) thing’s essential form. In the artificial order—the order of human doing and making—the principle is just as imperative, for there is nothing of man which is not ultimately sourced in nature. If the Church lays down a principle of operation, she cannot act other than in accordance with that principle without *moral* collapse—using *moral* here as connoting end—that is, without failing to achieve the end for which God created her. The inevitable consequence of the adoption of Cardinal Kasper’s reasoning is that nothing of the Church’s teaching could thereafter be regarded as immutable. This is Modernism in action.

But there is a precedent for what he proposes and it is to be found in Vatican II. The Church’s teaching that it was fundamentally erroneous to assert that men had a right to ‘religious freedom’ was recognised as infallible and immutable⁴ until *Dignitatis Humanae* was proclaimed on 7th December 1965—or rather, until Paul VI publicly abandoned the teaching two months prior in an address to the United Nations General Assembly.⁵ Pope Paul was wrong, as were the bishops of Vatican II.⁶

² The passage has been the subject of two commentaries of the *Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith*, *Dominus Iesus* (6th August 2000) and *Responses to Some Questions...* (29th June 2007) each of which rules that it did not alter the doctrine of the Church previously held.

³ The inversion of which truth, proclaimed by Descartes with his *cogito ergo sum*, infects all of modern philosophy. Upon this shaking foundation the Modernist heresy staggers about like a drunken man.

⁴ Cf. Dr John Lamont, https://www.academia.edu/877072/Catholic_teaching_on_religion_and_the_state

⁵ Notwithstanding their abandonment, it *remains* part of the Church’s infallible teaching—however much Vatican II adherents may assert the contrary. It only requires a pope with the intestinal fortitude to insist that Pope Paul and the bishops of Vatican II were wrong for the teaching to be re-instated. When that happens, the consequences for good in the world will be immense.

⁶ *Exempla trahunt*. The scandal of the rejection by Pope and bishops of this element of the Church’s constant teaching was to ground the widespread disobedience to *Humanae Vitae*.

Now, if a pope and a majority of the Church's bishops could abandon adherence to the Church's infallible teaching in one significant matter, why should not another pope lead another episcopal majority to tamper with the Church's infallible teaching in something more fundamental ?

Once you admit a principle the consequences flow.

Michael Baker

15th October, 2014—*St Teresa of Jesus (of Avila), Doctor of the Church*