



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* Knights of Malta *

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Chancellor's Update

Synodal Workshop

During the last couple of years all you would hear is what the German Synod was doing. Now that the word is out, the papacy or Pope Francis has determined they need another year to put the finishing touches in place. What are the finishing touches “for a welcoming Church that excludes no one.”

“In Switzerland, the Synodal process has yielded the judgement of the synthesis that Church teachings on gender and sexuality are “perceived as derogatory and exclusionary,” and there is a call for a reevaluation of such teachings in “synodal dialogue with the experiences of the people and in reception of scientific and empirical research.”

The report from Australia said, “In some instances, the Church was seen as placing barriers of exclusion by its teachings and the application of those teachings...” This was answered by Cardinal Arinze’s September 24, 2022, statement on same sex blessings. “It is reported that Flemish Bishops in Belgium on or around 20 September, 2022, published what they called a liturgical blessing for homosexual couples. They, it is said, regarded this step as “being pastorally close to homosexual persons, for a welcoming Church that excluded no one.”

Even if the aim is to be pastorally helpful to homosexual couples, this is an error on the part of the bishops. Holy Scripture presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity (cf. Gen 19:1-29; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:10; 1 Tim 1:10). Tradition says *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2357, “has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.”

While persons with homosexual inclinations are to be respected and not unjustly discriminated against, they, like every Christian and indeed every human being, are called to chastity (cf. CCC, 2358, 2359). The Lord Jesus said to his followers; “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). That is why the CCC says: “Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtue of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection” (CCC, 2359).

This explains why the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 15 March 2021 answered that the Church does not have the power to give a blessing to unions of persons of the same sex.

This is what the Flemish Bishops, and indeed all bishops and priests, should be teaching. They should be blessing, not homosexual couples, but properly married unions of one man and one woman. Human beings have no power to change the order established by God the Creator. The Church is sent by Christ to all people “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20). This includes calling people to repentance, sacrifice, chastity and perfection.

As we approach the renewal for another year, all is not lost. The following is taken originally from a Spanish website InfoVaticana and translated into English by *Inside the Vatican*.

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Not all German Bishops are crazy. Here is Cardinal Gerhard Muller, former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith answering questions put to him. Here are his opinions to a few questions. The following is from *Inside the Vatican* page 14, November-December 2022.

A somewhat controversial question: why does the Church talk more and more about ecology, the planet and other issues, and less and less about Jesus Christ and his teaching?

Cardinal Muller: In a world where the meaning and purpose of the human being are materially limited to temporal and transitory contents (such as the acquisition of power, prestige, money, luxury, pleasurable satisfaction), it is easier to become interested in being agents of this program of a “New World Order without God” (according to capitalist or communist readings). “What good is it for a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?” If we want to be disciples of Jesus, we must also obey his word: “Rather seek his kingdom and the rest will be given to you in addition” (Lk 12:31). There is no rigid opposition between the eternal/spiritual goods and the temporal/perishable necessities of life. But first let us ask God, our Father, for His Kingdom to come and for His holy will to be done in heaven as on earth. And we also ask for our daily bread, the forgiveness of our sins as we forgive those who offend us, and salvation from all evils that result from our sinful separation from God, the origin and goal of every human being.

The whole Church is following the steps of the German “Synodal Way” with attention and concern. What do you think of the decisions of the fourth assembly of the German Synodal Way?

Cardinal Muller: In theatrical language, one would not know exactly whether to speak of tragedy or comedy about this event. All the text, very abundant but not very profound, do not concern the renewal of Catholics in Christ but rather the surrender to a world without God. The only theme among all themes is sexuality. However, it is not understood as a gift from God given to human beings as created persons (in our masculine and feminine natures), hence the responsibility to participate as father and mother in God’s work of creation and in the universal will of salvation for one’s offspring, but rather as a kind of drug to put the basic nihilistic feeling to sleep with the utmost satisfaction of pleasure.

Both Cardinal Marx and Bishop Georg Batzing have supported text asking the Pope to change sexual morality, the ordination of women and the vision of homosexuality: what do you think? Cardinal Muller: There are two errors in this that only theologically ignorant people can make: 1) the Pope does not have the authority to change the teaching of the Church, which is rooted in the revelation of God. By doing so, he would exalt himself as a man to be above God. 2) The apostles can teach and order only what Jesus has commanded them to teach (Mt 28: 19). It is precisely the bishops, as well as their next successors, who are called to the “teaching of the apostles” (Acts 2:42) in Sacred Scripture, in the Apostolic Tradition and in accurate doctrinal definitions of previous decisions from the papal chair, or in ecumenical councils. The Roman Pontiff and the Bishops [...] do not accept any new public revelation as belonging to the divine deposit of faith” (Lumen gentium 25; cfr. Dei verbum 10).

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