

THE NAMES

Synod: appointments piloted pretending Holy Spirit made choices

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Reading the names of the participants in the Synod on synodality caused quite a stir among many observers. The appointments - “one sided” - it was said - guaranteed the desired result from the start. The Secretary General and the General Rapporteur, the

secretariat, the heads of the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, which have all been replaced, the characteristics of the people directly appointed by the pope, the composition of the representatives of key episcopates, such as the United States and Italy, the presence of "ultra-loyalists" ... all contribute to consolidating the suspicion of a piloted governance, as was the case for the Synod on the family.

It's important to remember that in a synod the decisions are always taken by a minority, which leads the "herd". Unlike the Synod on the family, however, this time the impact of the results will be far greater. This is a Synod on synodality which intends to make the convocation of synods a permanent practice of guidance and transformation of the universal Church. The "puppeteers" were also there at the Synod on the family, but now their role becomes truly strategic, and by pulling the strings of the puppets in one direction or the other is to plot the life of the entire Church for a long time.

Everyone can see that the existence of puppeteers in the synod clashes with the rhetoric of synodality, which as they say ad nauseam - should be about listening, participation, and involvement of all the components of the Church. We cannot forget what Francis said to Bishop Bruno Forte, according to the latter's testimony, during the Synod on the family: "If we speak explicitly about Communion to the divorced and remarried, you do not know what a terrible mess we will make. So we won't speak plainly, do it in a way that the premises are there, then I will draw out the conclusions.". There was overemphasis on the so-called consultation phase, which actually only involved a small number of the faithful, furthermore, along tracks that had already been mapped out, and now the course of the nominations for the new synod manifests the same intention of predetermined governance.

The most worrying aspect is that the "puppeteers" claim that the voice of the people they have chosen to participate in the synod is the voice of the Holy Spirit. Cardinal Mario Grech, general secretary of the Synod, in the editorial of the current issue of "Teologia", the magazine of the Theological Faculty of Milan, wrote: "... it is therefore seriously a synod to which the whole Church is summoned at different levels, with the aim of involving as much as possible all the baptised women and men, so as to listen to their voice and recognise in it and through it the voice of the Holy Spirit" (p. 4). If words have a meaning, Grech is saying here that the voice of the synod members is to be considered the voice of the Holy Spirit. I wonder whether this Hegelian view of things that underpins the whole structure of the synod doesn't call for a reaction.

Here, however, I would like to keep to considerations on a much lower, indeed, as simple as possible. How is it possible to nominate one's partisans with political and

power criteria, but then go so far as to claim their words are to be taken as the voice of the Holy Spirit? Can the Holy Spirit blow without also giving His own Gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and the fear of God? And does the practice of piloted appointments express wisdom, science, and the fear of God?

The approach expressed by Cardinal Grech can be found in all the documents relating to the synod, both the constitutive ones and those drafted *in itinere*. The Document for the Continental Stage, for example, points to "the depth of faith, the vitality of hope, and the energy of charity that overflow from the contributions received (n. 6)". The new conception of a synod wants to make every baptised person a synodite, and a problematic conception of the *sensus fidei* of the people of God would have it that every word spoken by a baptised person at the synod is automatically pregnant with supernatural virtues. In his 17 October 2015 speech on synod and synodality, Francis said that "the *sensus fidei* prevents a rigid separation between *Ecclesia docens* and *Ecclesia discens*, since the flock also possesses its own 'nose' for discerning the new paths that the Lord opens up to the Church". If that's the case, why then resort to tactical manipulation in view of the desired outcomes and establish in advance who can express this 'nose' better than another?

I presented the arguments in this article as meant to be 'as simple as possible'. And so let us leave Hegel out of the discussion. But this instrumental and fluctuating use of the Holy Spirit cannot fail to make us pause for thought. The Great Attendee risks being the Great Absentee.