

THE DOCUMENT

"And the Word became ideology". At the Synod a falsified Church

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"Enlarge the space of your tent"

(Is 54:2)

WORKING DOCUMENT
FOR THE CONTINENTAL STAGE



On October 27, Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the General Secretariat of the Synod, was the first to speak during the **press conference** presenting the *Working Document for the Continental Stage of the Synod*, a document summarising what had

emerged from the consultations. Actually, 'Enlarge the Space of your Tent', the title of the document, is the synthesis of syntheses. The various responses of the faithful were in fact sent to the respective dioceses, and by the dioceses to the relevant bishops' conference, which prepared an initial compendium. These summaries were then sent to the Synod Secretariat, which, through a group of 'experts', prepared a further summary, i.e. the document that has now been made public. According to Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, 112 out of 115 bishops' conferences, 15 Eastern Catholic Churches, 17 Roman Dicasteries, the Union of Major Superiors, and some movements and associations responded. Nothing was said about how many Catholics in the flesh sent in comments.

Cardinal Grech expressed his surprise and that of "the group that collaborated in the reading of the synthesis and the writing of the Document" because of the "singular convergence on many points of contributions that came from very different ecclesial and cultural contexts". What is more suspicious than surprising, however, is the expressive uniformity, in strict 'synodality', of the quoted citations. Grech plays it safe by acknowledging that "the Document was drafted starting from the syntheses of the Bishops' Conferences and not directly from the contributions of the individual Churches"; but at the same time he claims fidelity to the original contributions, categorically excluding the possibility "that all the Bishops' Conferences have purposely stifled the prophecy of the People of God", a suspicion that would be "just as ideological as supposing the contrary". A statement that implies, and perhaps the Cardinal has not realised, that even the supposition that there has been no falsification is ideological.

And indeed, taking a look at the summaries reported, the most probable hypothesis is that by now there is a substantial, profound falsification going on in the Church in both directions: from the institution to the faithful (or at least part of them), and from the latter to the institution. Cardinal Grech calls it the "dynamic of restitution"; in essence, a continuous back and forth: "from listening to the People of God the individual Bishops will be able to verify if and how much His Church recognises itself in the Document; the possible observations on the Document can be sent by the individual Churches to the Bishops' Conferences, which can in turn produce a more organic synthesis, which will contribute to the discernment of the Continental Assembly".

Why is this a process of falsification? Because many of God's people, especially the 'committed' ones, have been reached not by the preaching of the Gospel, but by the typical phrasing of pseudo-Christian ideology. To their pastors, therefore, are returned those aspirations that were in fact previously induced by the ideological hammering of the pastors themselves (with a few exceptions) and their various diocesan and parish

commissions. The pastors then sent the relevant offices of the bishops' conferences these responses, which were suitably synthesised, i.e. better amalgamated with the dominant ecclesial ideology. Thus reformulated, they will go back to the pastors and the people, so that they can 'internalise' the ideology and its phraseology even better. And so on, in a dynamic that is called 'circular prophecy-discernment dynamic', according precisely to an ideological vocabulary that is now well-tested.

What emerges, therefore, is not at all the *sensus fidei*, as the document suggests in §9, that is the consent of the faithful, by virtue of the theological virtue of faith, infused in them in Baptism, but rather a *consultatio fidelium*, ideologically conducted and reported.

Let us look in concrete terms at some examples of the ideology at work, citing some of those extracts that, according to the document, "try to give an idea of the richness of the materials received, letting the voice of the People of God from every part of the world resound".

Let us begin with a quotation from the synthesis offered by the Italian Bishop Conference (BC), which is purportedly one of the voices calling for total inclusiveness in the Church: "*The Church-home has no doors that close, but an ever-expanding perimeter*". Or, one coming from the Portuguese BC: "*The world needs an 'outgoing Church', which rejects the division between believers and non-believers, which turns its gaze to humanity and offers it, rather than a doctrine or a strategy, an experience of salvation, an 'overflowing of the gift' that responds to the cry of humanity and nature*". Or again this convoluted formulation of the Argentinean BC: "*It is important to build a synodal institutional model as an ecclesial paradigm of deconstruction of pyramidal power that favours unipersonal management*".

In the face of such formulations, there are only two possibilities: either the initial answers have been widely distorted to conform to the current wording of the synodal church, or the answers are authentic, but come from that tiny portion of committed Catholics (who, however, are to be found - consistently - in all pastoral councils, diocesan councils, commissions, and so on) sufficiently ideologised. That 'chosen portion' that, to make it clear, supports the lawfulness of abortion, but teaches catechism; is an extraordinary minister, but does not believe in transubstantiation; turns the parish upside down to remove wax candles and save the planet from global warming, but keeps their home at 24 degrees at least.

Another omnipresent aspect in the document is the hammering on about inclusiveness.

In §13, it is stated that the "synodal Church [...] learns from listening how to renew its evangelising mission in the light of the signs of the times, in order to continue to offer humanity a way of being and living in which all can feel included and protagonists". Who are the excluded who must be "included and protagonists"? Who are those who do not feel represented in the Church? The reading of § 39 raises more than the suspicion that these are people who live and think in a way that contradicts the faith on substantial aspects; and who have no intention of changing, but instead await a change on the part of the Church, so that it may recognise as inspired by the Holy Spirit, as a prophetic voice, or sign of the times - according to the already more than tried and tested synodal phraseology - what instead simply expresses a feeling, a desire, a way of life that must be corrected and purified: "Among those who ask for a more incisive dialogue and a more welcoming space we also find those who for various reasons feel a tension between belonging to the Church and their own affective relationships, such as: remarried divorcees, single parents, people living in a polygamous marriage, LGBTQ people, etc."

An indication accompanied by a quote from the ideologically correct summary sent by the BC of the USA: *"People request that the Church be a refuge for the wounded and broken, not an institution for the perfect. They want the Church to meet people wherever they are, to walk with them rather than judge them, and to build real relationships through caring and authenticity, not a sense of superiority"*.

In the same vein are the paragraphs dedicated to the subject of the alleged exclusion of women from the life of the Church: "Many syntheses [...] call for the Church to continue discernment on certain specific issues: the active role of women in the governance structures of ecclesial bodies, the possibility for women with adequate formation to preach in parish settings, the female diaconate. Much more diversified positions are expressed with regard to priestly ordination for women, which some syntheses call for, while others consider the issue closed" (§ 64). The contribution of institutes of consecrated life sounds the charge: *"In the decision-making processes and language of the Church sexism is widespread [...]. As a result, women are precluded from significant roles in the life of the Church, and suffer discrimination because they do not receive a fair wage for the tasks and services they perform. [...] In some Churches there is a tendency to exclude women and to entrust ecclesial tasks to permanent deacons; and also to undervalue consecrated life without a habit"*.

Who knows whether the underestimation of consecrated life without habit is the main problem in the Church today. It certainly makes a certain sense that the document is silent about what is now before the eyes of even the most blind among the

blind: mass apostasy, galling liturgies, the collapse of priestly and religious vocations, contempt for human life, broken families. And a pontificate that is increasingly the cause of the disorientation of the faithful.