

DIVIDED CHURCH

Confusion: Vatican smokescreen for Synod

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The recent events regarding the topics to emerge at the Synod, but which in general concern the very nature of the Church and its place in the world, prompt some considerations. But, two in particular. The first one: the advent of the newly appointed Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez to the head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has clearly opened a new phase in Francis' pontificate, namely the choice of an

open war against those who simply dare to voice doubts or perplexities on this or that statement of the Pope or, worse, on the direction taken by the current Pontificate.

Not only has Fernandez spoken and badmouthed at length in all directions even before officially taking office as prefect, but once he took office he immediately made it clear that he "takes no prisoners". In an [interview with the *National Catholic Register*](#) on 11 September, he branded as "on a road to heresy and schism" those bishops who pretend to "judge the doctrine of the Pope", inventing a charism that never existed, according to which only the Pope has "a living and active gift" that allows him to interpret the "static" deposit of faith. In other words, the Pope can decide whatever he wants and no one can object, a sort of Marquis Del Grillo. And on 2 October, the same Fernandez saw fit to publish in quick succession the Pope's response to the first *Dubia* of July of the 5 cardinals ([passing them off as a current and definitive answer](#)) and the answers to the Archbishop Emeritus of Prague, Cardinal Dominik Duka, on the question of Communion to remarried divorcees, followed by the confusion generated by the post-synodal Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

If the aim was to close certain arguments and settle the score with those who resist the subversion of the Church, and then to proceed quietly, according to plan, with the agenda already prepared for the Synod, the calculations were probably wrong. This is demonstrated by [the vigorous reaction of Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke](#), who at the conference organised on 3 October in Rome by the *Daily Compass (La Nuova Bussola)*, responded in tune to Fernandez's statements, claiming the duty to defend "the perennial doctrine and discipline of the Church", and dismantling Fernandez's theological inventions: "One must reflect", Burke said, "on the gravity of the ecclesial situation when the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith accuses of heresy and schism those who ask the Holy Father to exercise the Petrine Office to safeguard and promote *the depositum fidei*."

And Cardinal Burke does not only speak on a personal basis, nor are there only [the other four cardinals who signed](#) the *Dubia* with him. It was precisely the Rome conference 'The Synodal Babel' that showed that there is an important part of the Church that is on the same wavelength and is preparing to 'resist'. [Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller](#) and [other bishops](#) have also expressed public support for the *Dubia* and certainly many other pastors will follow.

What is looming therefore is an open clash, after years of attrition and underhand tactics to change the Church. But one should understand that this is not simply a power struggle between groups. It is true that the overwhelming majority of Catholics or, to be

more precise, of churchgoers are substantially indifferent to what is happening, but at stake is the very nature of the Church, as Cardinal Burke masterfully explained in his speech at the conference on 3 October: it is a clash between those who think they have to create a "new Church" using the vague concept of synodality to make Divine Revelation "flexible" and those who instead defend what the Church has always announced over the past two thousand years.

A second element concerns the strategy pursued by the Pope and his court of advisors. In the space of just three days, the Holy See has concentrated events and decisions that could suffice for several months: the aforementioned replies to the first of the *Dubia* by the '5 cardinals' and those to Cardinal Duka, then the opening of the Synod and at the same time, also yesterday, the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*, a supplement to the encyclical *Laudato Si'* published eight years ago.

These are all important events that require in-depth study and discussion, but they are being fired off in rapid succession, not because of a lack of coordination of the various offices or organisational disorder, but with a precise objective: to open several fronts at once to prevent debate. It is impossible to reflect seriously on a subject, grasp all its implications, assess its meaning, if one has to deal with several things all at once. Those who focus on the Synod will miss the climate issue. Those who focus on the embarrassing - as scandalous as it is - *Laudate Deum* and the demented parterre of testimonials who will present it today, will lose sight of Communion to remarried divorcees and the attempts to impose a "new Church". In the confusion it is easier to push through most of the novelties, creating a smoke screen makes it more difficult for those who want to oppose it to identify the target. And in any case everything remains on a superficial level.

This is why we have decided not to dedicate any articles to the *Laudate Deum* today, we will not be distracted by this strategy. We will continue to deal in depth with the issues of the *Dubia* and the Synod; in the coming days, calmly but with well-pondered arguments, we will also address the issues related to the Climate Exhortation. Besides, those who follow the *Daily Compass* know very well that we often address the subject of climate change and the environmental issue based on real science. And those who would like to remind themselves in the meantime can rewatch the videos of the conference '[Protecting the environment by protecting mankind](#)' that we organised in Milan on 25 March.