

EXCLUSIVE

## Five cardinals question Pope on Synod topics: Here's their Dubia

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ECCLESIA

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Dear Catholics, on the occasion of the Synod (and not only) "high prelates" make statements seriously contrary to the Catholic faith which are never corrected by those who have the responsibility. For this reason we asked Pope Francis specific questions,

according to the tradition of the Church, to which however he did not answer. Therefore, we have decided to make the letter public, so that you, the faithful, are not disoriented by the prevailing confusion and do not fall into error. This is the substance of the letter to the lay faithful signed by five cardinals - Raymond Leo Burke, Walter Brandmüller, Robert Sarah, Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, Juan Sandoval Íñiguez -, made public today throughout the world and accompanied by the publication of the five *Dubia* submitted to Pope Francis, and published by the *Daily Compass* .

**The “Dubia” are formal questions posed to the Pope** and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith asking for clarification on particular topics concerning doctrine or practice. As will be remembered, five **Dubia were submitted to Pope Francis in 2016** after the publication of the post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*: also on that occasion there was the signature of cardinals Burke and Brandmüller, to which were added cardinals Carlo Caffarra and Joachim Mesner, now deceased. Since then Pope Francis has never responded directly to the *Dubia*, only indirect responses can be gleaned from his attitudes.

**Now the script seems to repeat itself**, however with two important innovations: first of all, the number of cardinals who put their signature to the *Dubia* is increasing ( a representative for each continent). And, it should be remembered that the signatory cardinals should have been six not five, to include that of the Australian cardinal George Pell, who died suddenly on January 11, and who was very active in the process to arrive at the formulation of the *Dubia*.

**Secondly, this time we have two versions of the Dubia:** the first is dated July 10th. On this occasion, Pope Francis actually responded the following day, but not in the canonical form, which is that of an answer to a question, but in the form of a letter which however - as is his style - avoids the crux of the question. This led the five cardinals to reformulate the Dubia so that the Pope could simply respond answering with a "yes" or a "no". Reformulated in this way, they were sent again to Pope Francis on 21 August. Since then there has been silence, at least that is regarding the content of the questions. In fact, now we understand better why recently Cardinal Burke has been the subject of controversial barbs both by the Pope - in the [press conference on his return from Mongolia](#) - and by the new prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Victor Manuel Fernández, in the interview with the [National Catholic Register](#). It is perhaps a sign of the nervousness that this initiative generates and which is now impacting on a Synod that is raising considerable controversy both in its contents and by its methods of implementation and communication.

**In fact, the five Dubia go to the heart of the topics** that will be covered in the Synod which are fundamental to understanding what is at stake in the synodal assembly (furthermore, an important contribution will also be made at the "[Synodal Tower of Babel](#)" the conference organised by the Daily Compass in Rome on October 3). It is significant that they are being made public on the eve of the Synod which highlights the concern of large sectors of the Church for what is happening and for the declarations made by those who will lead the Synod.

Below is a summary of the questions posed by the five cardinals:

**1. The first Dubium concerns the immutable value of Divine revelation.** In the first version reference is made to those who maintain that "Church Divine Revelation should be reinterpreted according to the cultural changes of our time". And therefore the Pope is asked "if Divine Revelation is binding forever, immutable and therefore not to be contradicted". Given the evasive answer, the reformulation asks even more precisely whether it is possible that "the Church today teaches doctrines contrary to those that she has previously taught on matters of faith and morals".

**2. The second question is in some way an exemplification of the first.** That is: given "the widespread practice of the blessing of same-sex unions", can it be said that this is in accordance with Revelation and the Magisterium? In the reformulation the question becomes two fold, because it is clear that this blessing does not concern individual people so much as homosexuality in itself. And in fact the question is: "Is it

possible that in some circumstances a pastor could bless unions between homosexual persons, thus suggesting that homosexual behaviour as such would not be contrary to God's law and the person's journey towards God?". And secondly, as a consequence, it is asked if "every sexual act outside of marriage, and in particular homosexual acts constitutes an objectively grave sin against God's law"?

**3. The third question concerns synodality which some consider to be a "constitutive dimension of the Church".**

Wouldn't this mean a subversion of the order wanted by Jesus Himself whereby "the Supreme Authority of the Church belongs exclusively to the Roman Pontiff" and the college of bishops? In the reformulation, the question becomes even more precise and current: will the Synod be given the power to override the authority of the Pope and the college of bishops on the doctrinal and pastoral matters with which it will be concerned?

**4. The fourth Dubium focuses on the possibility of the priestly ordination of women,**

which calls into question both the definition of ministerial priesthood, reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council, and the teaching of Saint John Paul II who had already taken this topic as defined. The reformulation asks whether this impossibility will still be valid in the future.

**5. The last Dubium concerns forgiveness defined as a "human right"**

and "the Holy Father's insistence on the duty to absolve everyone and always". Can one be absolved without repentance, contradicting everything the Church has always taught? In the reformulation, the question is specified more succinctly: can a penitent who refuses to make the intention not to commit the confessed sin again, "validly receive sacramental absolution"?