

INTERVIEW

Müller: "The Synod, a step towards Protestantisation"

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"The criteria of Catholic ecclesiology have been lost, (...) it is not said openly, but the path that has been taken is that of Protestantisation". Cardinal Gerard L. Müller's assessment of the Synod on Synodality, which has just ended, is extremely worrying. The Daily

Compass meets the Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the sidelines of the Rome Life Forum, a two-day event organised by LifeSiteNews, where he was a key speaker. Even from the stage, Cardinal Müller warned that it is pure illusion to think of "modernising the truth of the Gospel with the help of relativistic philosophies or ideologically corrupt anthropologies. Just look at the local realities where this progressive theology prevails: empty seminaries, the disappearance of monastic life, the abandonment of the faithful. In Germany, for example, 13 million Catholics have been lost in 50 years, from 33 million in 1968 to 20 million in 2023'. And, to the *Daily Compass*, he reiterates: "The aim of this Synod was to change the hierarchical structure of the Church, taking the Anglican or Protestant Church as a model, but what we see is that synodality destroys collegiality.

Your Eminence, what do you mean by a change in the structure of the Church?

Simply that when the Pope called the laity to participate, he changed the nature of the Synod, which was born instead as an expression of the collegiality of all the bishops with the Pope. It is not only the Pope who governs the Church, as some admirers of Pope Francis would have it today, but the local bishops also have responsibility for the whole Church. This is why Paul VI, implementing the Second Vatican Council, created the synod.

For some, increasing the role of the laity seems like a simple reform

... In reality, it ignores the sacrament of Holy Orders, which is not just a function of service, but a direct, special institution of Jesus Christ. He established the Church with its hierarchy. Appealing to the universal priesthood of all the faithful is in this case, a way of denying this structure willed by Christ. All the faithful have received the Holy Spirit, but the bishops have received the consecration to govern and sanctify the Church. If you want to talk to the laity, it's all very well, but there are other instruments, for example the International Theological Commission. Or you can create other ad hoc institutions, it's not a problem, but the Synod has a different nature and the Pope cannot change the sacramental structure of the Church. You cannot give episcopal authority to someone who is not a bishop.

Is that why you criticised the fact that the Bishops did not wear the cassock during the Synod?

The question of the cassock may seem to be an insignificant detail, but it points to the position I expressed earlier. Comfort is not a criterion: when I go to a wedding, I don't go dressed as if I were going to the beach; it would be more comfortable, but not appropriate to the circumstances. A synod, like a council, is a liturgy, a worship of God, not just a meeting. So even the dress says what the Synod has become, a torrent of

chatter.

Considering the theme was synodality, what was actually discussed?

After so many discussions, nobody really knows what synodality is. There was so much talk, there were "moderators" at the tables, who gave the topics day by day by asking questions, but the debate was also very rigid, the time for interventions was limited to three minutes and everything was recorded. Each participant had a monitor in front of them and every contribution was recorded, even on video. Then there was this constant 'we have to listen to each other', nobody wanted to play the role of 'troublemaker', in short, there was a taming. And also for the plenary, many bishops were disappointed, they complained about the low level of the interventions; and then you cannot deal with theological issues with emotions.

Can you give an example?

A testimony comes in, a woman speaks of someone close to her who committed suicide because she was bisexual, and she says that the parish priest had condemned her because of her bisexuality. And immediately afterwards there's another intervention: you see, it is proof that the Church must change its doctrine. In short, in the end, it is the fault of the Church's doctrine, that is, of God who created man and woman. How do you deal with issues like that? Now, the LGBT people are setting themselves up as the true interpreters of the Word of God, but they convey a perverse, false anthropology: they are not interested in individuals, in their salvation, but they instrumentalise people with problems to assert their ideology. They want to destroy the family and marriage.

In this regard, you have already stated that in the end this Synod only wanted to promote the LGBT agenda and the female diaconate. What gave this impression?

Because much was said about this and very little about the essential themes of the faith, that is, the Incarnation, salvation, redemption, justification, sin, grace, human nature, the ultimate goal of man, the Trinitarian and Eucharistic dimension of the Church, vocations, education. These are the real challenges, as is the spread of great violence, of those who justify it in the name of God, like the Muslim fundamentalists. Of this nothing, instead so many speeches on homosexuality, and all one-sided.

Besides, look at the guests...

Exactly. Why weren't people invited who were practicing homosexuals and then rediscovered their heterosexuality, and who have written books about their experiences, such as Daniel Mattson (author of *Why I Don't Call Myself Gay. How I Reclaimed My Sexual Reality and Found Peace*, Cantagalli 2018, ed.)? There was Father

James Martin, he was only there to spread propaganda. He never spoke of grace and salvation for these people, only that "the Church must accept, the Church must..., must..., must..." But how can the Bride of Christ be the object of our invectives? It is not the Church that needs to change, it is we who need to be converted.

The fact that during the Synod Pope Francis received and praised Sister Jeannine Gramick, the founder of a 'Catholic' LGBT movement in the United States, condemned at the time by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, also caused quite a stir.

Cardinal Hollerich (the synod's general rapporteur, ed.) said that homosexuality was not the subject of the synod, but then it was talked about and even obvious gestures were made, like this one. And the Pope always appears with these people. The justification is pastoral, but does this promote the pastoral care of these people or does it accept this condition as a legitimate expression of human nature and of the Christian faith? The question is left open, but clearly one interpretation is favoured.

Speaking of sexuality, did the Synod address the issue of abuse? Were there echoes of the Rupnik scandal?

No one had the courage to really address this issue, it was just used as a pretext to attack the clergy. Everything is the fault of the clergy, but in the end it is the fault of Jesus Christ, who established the apostolate. The clergy is the sum of all the bishops, priests and deacons. It is not their existence that is the cause of abuse, but the fact that individuals do not respect the sixth commandment. But this is not said, the sin against the sixth commandment is never mentioned, other excuses are found. As with the blessing of homosexual couples: it is said that confusion with the sacrament of marriage must be avoided. But that's not the issue. The issue is that homosexual and extra-marital acts are a mortal sin and therefore cannot be blessed. Confusion has nothing to do with it, they are always trying to change the subject.

So do you think that the accusation of clericalism is a pretext to attack priests as such?

It is a fact, even at the Synod priests were constantly spoken badly about, even by the Pope. If there are some good words in the final document, it is the work of the editors, because so many complained. But the general tone of the Synod was very negative. There is a caricature of the Catholic priesthood, as if it were a caste, as opposed to the laity. In reality we are one community, but with a specificity, because not everyone has received this sacred power. This is the difference with Protestantism, they deny this essential difference with the universal priesthood of the faithful, Luther says that the

sacrament of Orders does not exist, that it is an instrument of the devil. There can be no compromise on this point. And instead, the Church tries to minimise the ministerial priesthood by always speaking negatively about priests: abusers, who subjugate women, who whip sinners in the confessional, always negatively. The poor priests of today, attacked from all sides, seem to be worried about vocations. Where is the pastoral care for vocations? It is Jesus who calls, not the Pope; priests belong to Jesus, not the Pope. And this example also affects so many bishops, who learn from it and rule against priests in their dioceses.

In short, from the approach of the Synod to the way the priests speak, it seems that the ideal they want to move towards is Protestantism.

They do not express themselves in this way, but in the end it comes to this.