

Post-Conclave

Synodality: Hollerich attempts to constrain Pope Leo

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Everyone is trying to make their claim to Pope Leo. It is hardly surprising, given the large number of cardinal electors, their heterogeneity, and the diversity of their positions. Despite the current fashion of saying that the conclave was united, it was not. To obtain

two-thirds of the votes in such a scenario requires more than a compromise.

For a few days now, we have been witnessing the spectacle of those who refer to every gesture and word of the new Pontiff to prove that he is or is not in line with Bergoglio. He wore the mozzetta and spoke of walls; he sang the Regina Cæli and called for synodality; he refused the Fiat 500 XL and quotes Francis at every public appearance. Then there are the reconstructions of how the conclave went and who voted for whom, aided by some cardinals with a flexible approach to the secrecy they promised to observe.

However, credit must be given to Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg, who, in an **interview with *Avvenire*,** the Italian Episcopal Conference daily newspaper, is playing it safe and trying to protect the new pontificate. 'Pope Leo spoke of a "synodal Church" in his first message,' explains the cardinal. 'Having participated in the work of the Synod, we have a Pontiff who knows, understands and dares synodality. There will be no revolution that no one in the Church wants, but there will be evolution. And that is the best way to change'. It is somewhat touching to read that Hollerich, a man open to the possibility of women being ordained as deacons and priests, and who considers the idea that homosexuality is 'intrinsically disordered' to be questionable, is telling us that no one in the Church wants a revolution, but rather an evolution. The suspicion is that he does not want a revolution because it could mean a return to order is quite strong.

'Leo XIV will have his own style and characteristics, but in the wake of Francis,' Hollerich reassures us. Then, speaking in the first person plural, he seems to put himself on the list of supporters, saying, 'We did not choose him because he seems less flashy than his predecessor.'

So, hands off synodality — woe betide anyone who touches it! To make things clear with the new pope, Hollerich calls on his fellow synodality advocate, Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary general of the Synod of Bishops. He reassures us that 'Pope Leo took part in the Synod as prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops'. He had no fears or apprehensions. He saw how synodality makes the Church more missionary,' he explained, adding that Grech 'will go to Leo XIV to inform him of what Francis has decided'. The new pope may also make some adjustments, as is natural for any new pontiff. In any case, synodality is inherent to the Church.' Francis has spoken, so the matter is settled. For the new Pope, there is only room for a few adjustments, not least because, as Hollerich assures us, synodality is inherent in the Church. While it is unclear where this dogma of the synodal Church originates, we note with satisfaction that

Hollerich acknowledges that not even the Pope can contravene divine law. If he applied this principle to women's ordination and homosexuality rather than synodality, we might even agree.

Fiducia Supplicans is also armoured. According to the Archbishop of Luxembourg, the statement in the Pope's short speech from the central loggia that the Church is open to all was intended to echo Francis's 'todos, todos, todos'. For this reason, he explains, 'I hypothesise that the new Pope may reinterpret *Fiducia supplicans*, but not abolish it'. Among other things, the Church does not intend to equate same-sex unions with marriage. In fact, the declaration emphasises that every person is blessed by God". However, with all due respect to Hollerich, the declaration permits blessings for couples in relationships that are considered 'intrinsically disordered', rather than for individuals. Following widespread criticism, Francis and Víctor Manuel Fernández began a series of 'clarifications' ([see here](#)), introducing non-liturgical blessings lasting a few seconds for individuals and couples. This has created confusion upon confusion. Now, Hollerich is protecting his position by ruling out the possibility of abolishing the Declaration and suggesting reinterpretation as an alternative. Ultimately, the new Pope will have to clarify whether the focus is on blessing couples or individuals. In the former case, opposition is inevitable; in the latter, agreement is possible.

Also considering another interview with another cardinal. This time it is Marcello Semeraro's turn. He was one of the leading supporters of Parolin's candidacy, but reading between the lines of his statements, it seems that he would have followed 'where the wind blows' when the votes for the Secretary of State were not increasing. Semeraro therefore also seems to be among those who voted for Prévost.

"Pope Francis shares a vision of human and social promotion that springs from the Gospel," as well as sensitivity to migrants, being himself a "son" of immigration, explains the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. In his opinion, these will be the points of continuity with Francis. 'But I would add that we should expect at least eighty per cent change,' he says, given the radical difference in formation and sensibility between Leo XIV and Francis. After not speaking on the subject for years, Semeraro has suddenly become impatient with the confusion between 'the process of developing ideas and the decision-making process' that has led to 'a sociological reading of the synodal treasure, accompanied by the conjecture that someone can decide in place of the bishop'. In other words, granting lay people the right to vote in the Synod of Bishops threatens the hierarchical structure that Christ intended for the Church. A prime example of courage of those who speak when the body is dead and buried.

However, Semeraro has another great dream, shared by post-conciliar progressives everywhere, including his friend Parolin: the Council as a prophecy yet to be fulfilled. 'There are many insights of the Council that are still waiting to be put into practice.' This phrase recurs every time the Church makes a mistake. Let us pray that Leo XIV does not fall into the trap.