

SECOND SESSION.

The 'farce' Synod redefines sins according to political logic

ECCLESIA

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The next phase of the Synod on Synodality is due to begin. The work on the table of this second session entitled 'For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission' will take place from 2 to 27 October. Already in the preceding days though, the synod

members will take part in two appointments in St. Peter's Basilica: a spiritual retreat that will last for two days (from 30 September to 1 October), and then a penitential Liturgy that, according to the **indications** of the General Secretariat of the Synod, will include the public confession of certain sins listed as follows: against peace, creation, indigenous peoples, migrants; against abuse; against women, the family, young people; against the sin of doctrine used as a stone thrown against; poverty, synodality i.e. lack of listening, communion and participation of all.

Notably, this Synod does not enjoy popular consensus. A **demoscopic survey**, immediately cancelled by the Vatican, had stated that the vast majority of those interviewed did not expect the synod to produce anything worthwhile. The theological fragility on which it claims to be based, the tactics of ecclesiastical politics to which it is subjected, the practice of a piloted and inclusive dialogue and, above all, the perception that its culmination has already been decided and that all these paths are instrumental have led to the word 'farce' being used. Therefore the second session is anticipated with a certain weariness.

The Synod on synodality is evidently a forcing, an instrument to evolve ecclesial practice towards something new without saying so, a practical project to insert a new sensibility, a method of approach that changes the way of being, a way of feeling that changes the way of thinking about faith. As we have **already noted** previously, this is also evident in the *Instrumentum laboris* drafted for this second session, and we find confirmation of this in that farcical list of sins for which to forgiveness will be asked in the Penitential Liturgy of 1 October.

The sins listed here lack form, they lack substance, so the faithful are unable to assess what it means to sin by virtue of those sins. Theft is appropriation of another's property. But what is the form of sin against primitive peoples or immigrants? One cannot repent and ask forgiveness for something that one cannot define and, therefore, evaluate. To sin against peace, creation, indigenous peoples, migrants ... in general, without evaluating the content of the action, the circumstances and the intentions, is superficial and morally unindicative. What's more, it easily opens the door to political or ideological content and, in their light, ends up calling sin what may instead be common sense.

Two sins in particular appear incomprehensible in the list of the Penitential Liturgy: that of 'doctrine used as a stone thrown against' and that against synodality. That particular expression on doctrine has been used, as is well known, several times by Francis, but it is nothing but a slogan, a catch phrase that is difficult to translate into

theological language. It is a polemical phrase, to strike someone, to stigmatise any attitude of fidelity to doctrine against the threats of reckless pastoral care, a way of saying praxis has priority over doctrine without stating it explicitly, or to dismiss those who believe that doctrinal foundations never change.

The sentence that purports to express this sin follows the same logic as the fight against hate speeches, hate speech, which is basically a way of blaming those who speak truths that do not please the given powers at a given time. Or it resembles the condemnation of fake news: power is the first to use them, but then calls for a fight against them when they express unwelcome truths. Often fake news is the only truth to be heard. Will we have to ask for forgiveness for recalling some doctrinal principle by refuting those who want to change it? Will those who recall the eternal truths be likened to stone-throwers?

Even more farcical is the sin against synodality. If there is a clear point about synodality, it is that **no one knows what it is**. The ecclesiastical establishment itself states that its nature is to be process: we do not have a synod, we are synod and therefore we are process and path, and it will be during this path that we will discover, but never definitively, what synodality is. It will not have a defined form, but will be a practice to be experienced.

On this basis, how can a sin against synodality be established? When the authority establishes that this or that action is a sin against synodality, the synodal process will have evolved in the meantime and it could then be the censors who sin against it. When one assumes a historicist logic - as synodality as a process does - nothing is sin anymore, because when sin is seen as such it has already been overcome and no longer exists.