

PERPLEXITIES

Three reflections on the synod weekend

ECCLESIA

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Synod.va, which marked the “Jubilee of Synodal Themes and Participatory Bodies 2025” this 24-26 October, has been busy stocking social media with tweets. Two particularly stood out, along with certain elements of the Holy Father’s homily Sunday to the synodalists. In the spirit of “synodal dialogue,” let me voice my concerns.

Mary as Rorschach

Pardon me if I take exception from Synod.va's "theology by tweet." In a recent posting we are assured that Mary is "guardian" of the "synodal Church" because she "meditates and dialogues."

Is this the same Mary who, "at the first of His signs in Cana of Galilee" (Jn 2:11) seemed rather prescriptive: "do whatever He tells you" (v. 5)?

Yes, Mary asks questions. But Mary's fundamental posture is one of obedience, of doing whatever Elohim told her. She doesn't equivocate about what He wants. And she is entrusted to the Church as its Mother (Jn 19:26) to "accompany" souls by leading them to conversion in her crucified Son, not primarily as "guardian" of dialogue. I take exception because I don't think Our Lady should be somebody's theological Rorschach test.

The Spirit by Appointment?

The same Synod.va posted another tweet extolling people sitting in circles talking. "Glimpses of this afternoon's Conversations in the Spirit session at the Jubilee of Synodal Themes and Participatory Bodies 2025." (What a mouthful!)

I recently voiced doubts about what I called the "inverted pneumatology" that seems to be afflicting today's Church: the idea that the Holy Spirit today primarily teaches the Church from the *Zeitgeist*. Secular modernity now seems to be the *locus* of divine action; the Church, the "backwardist" resistance only synodality can reform.

Consider the mouthful phrase: "*this afternoon's Conversations in the Spirit*." With all due respect, doesn't it seem presumptuous to anoint something as the "Spirit's" work, much less very His prompted speaking? It prompts the further question: does the "Spirit" now have scheduled inspiration times? (If so, are they before or after *Sancta Siesta*)?

What Church Is This?

In his homily at Mass for the Synodal Jubilee, Pope Leo called for "more humble Church," not one "triumphant and inflated with pride," one that thinks not that "truth is ... possessed, but sought together...."

With all due respect to the Holy Father, I do not know what Church he is describing. It seems less the Church the average Catholic is a member of than a synodalist's strawman. It's not the Catholic Church I recognize or have worshipped in for decades, though the Pope and I are roughly the same generation. Nor does it seem that many Catholics today see today's Church as 'triumphant and inflated with pride.' One can argue they rather see it as timorous and uncertain. They don't think that truth is an unending quest for some flag ever marching ahead but that, with due humility, is something already *possessed*, at least in part. They wonder whether a Church unsure whether the truth it possesses is either possessed or true is an uncertain herald. And I

suggest they think that continuing down such a path, far from “reforming” the Church, is one leading her into a dead end.