

Articles of Interest
For
30 October 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Two: Love and Justice

Justice Is Love in Action

Contemplative activist and Episcopal priest Adam Bucko believes that contemplation is a universal call that prepares us to seek and do justice:

Intimacy with God does not belong to a special group of religious professionals but is and should be available to all. It is our birthright. It is why we were born. It is why we are here, to open ourselves “to the inner mystery of the heart of reality which is the heart of each one of us.” [1] To open ourselves to that love, to see the world through its eyes, and to live from it with courage and commitment. . . .

All of this has to start with each of us. It has to start with my commitment to a practice of prayer. All of this has to start with my adopting a way of life that can help me grow and nourish my spiritual life, including building community, so that I may become God’s hands and feet and microphone for healing and justice.

Bucko shares several steps for those beginning a path of contemplative action:

- First commit to engaging with the world from a place of prayer, and not ideology; this gives you a felt sense

of interconnectedness of all life in God and prevents othering.

- Second, commit to doing the work of coming to terms with your social location and how it relates to systemic racism, poverty, militarism, ecological devastation, and some of the distorted moral narratives that are so prevalent. Are there privileges you need to acknowledge or let go of? Are there commitments you need to reevaluate?
- Third, remember that talking about justice is not the same as doing justice, so simplify your life and commit to ethical living by buying all your necessities in socially responsible, ecologically minded, and human-scale companies. . . .
- Practice works of mercy, making sure that your hands are touching the hands of someone who is suffering, [and] include Mother Earth in that as well.
- Join a social movement, because changing your spending habits or serving others is only part of what is needed. Our lives and relationships do not happen in a vacuum but rather within institutions and systems that have their own crooked logic and are in need of massive changes. . . .

As you move toward a life of personal and political holiness, may your journey be blessed and may your life and presence remind those around you of God’s presence. Deepening your connection to God, in you and around you, do not be afraid to feel the love, the joy, and also the pain that are present. Don’t be afraid to have a heart and to risk breaking your heart. Feel into it all and know that every time you are touching the pain, you are touching the sacred wound of God. God who is always accompanying us and guiding us. God who is suffering

with us. . . . God whose life-giving love and justice will one day be “all in all” [1 Corinthians 15:28].

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Week Forty-Two: Love and Justice

Hospitality of the Heart

Father Richard understands justice as loving solidarity with those who suffer:

We must not separate ourselves from the suffering of the world. When we're close to those in pain, their need evokes love in us. Very few of us have the largess, the magnanimity to just decide to be loving. Someone has to ask it of us. We have to place ourselves in situations with people who are not like us, outside our systems of success and security, so we can read life from another perspective. The needs we witness will pull us toward love, toward generosity and compassion.

I think the icon of the cross does this on a spiritual level. The bleeding body pulls us into itself and into bleeding humanity, too. I experience this pull when watching the news, witnessing the suffering of people all over the world. I realize much of the broadcast is superficial and even biased, but it takes me out of the protective bubble of my little hermitage where I can live far too peacefully and comfortably. It makes me more aware that right now there is a woman in Syria or Ukraine carrying her baby and running for her life. I must take that in and be in solidarity with her in whatever ways I can, witnessing what she is going through:

the anxiety, the pain, the fear. That's what teaches us how to love. That is the pain we must allow to transform us and inspire us to act somehow.

All of us are called to the work of justice, which will look different for many people. My primary work is to send prayer and love toward those who are hurting. I do believe consciousness is the deepest level of reality. I also use my voice, through my teaching and writing, to awaken others to the reality of suffering and injustice in the world. I hope to encourage them to allow God's love to flow through them, transforming and healing pain. I also hope that our Living School and other programs are helping to train and equip people to meet the suffering in the world. [1]

For theologians Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill, we restore justice when we practice “hospitality of heart” inspired by Jesus:

Jesus embodied the justice of God in his love, hospitality, truth, and grace. Jesus had a just mission. Revealing the justice of God, Jesus welcomed the stranger, rejected social discrimination, confronted economic injustice, spoke against institutional power, and repudiated war and violence. . . .

Carol Dempsey says that the spirit of justice is “hospitality of heart.” [2] When we open our hearts to hospitality, we feel compelled to seek justice. When we embrace creation, the poor, our enemies, strangers, foreigners, outcasts, and others, we desire justice for them. We welcome without judging. We love our neighbors as ourselves. We reflect the justice, love, and hospitality of God. This hospitality leads us to desire and work for the flourishing, well-being, and good of others. [3]

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Week Forty-Two: Love and Justice

Aligning Ourselves with God's Heart

The real contemplative takes the whole world in and shelters it, reveres it, and protects it with a body made of the steely substance of a justice that springs from love.
—Joan Chittister, *Illuminated Life*

Like Father Richard, Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister connects contemplation with the pursuit of justice:

The contemplative responds to the divine in everyone. God wills the care of the poor as well as the reward of the rich; so, therefore, must the true contemplative. God wills the end of oppressors who stand with the heel in the neck of the weak; so, therefore, does the true contemplative. God wills the liberation of all human beings; so, therefore, must the true contemplative. God desires the dignity and full development of all human beings. Thus, God takes the side of the defenseless. And, thus, therefore, must the true contemplative; otherwise, that contemplation is not real, cannot be real, will never be real, because to contemplate the God of justice is to be committed to *justice*. The true contemplative, the truly spiritual person, then, must *do* justice, must *speak* justice, must *insist* on justice, and they do, and they always have, and they *are*.

Thomas Merton spoke out from a cloister in Kentucky against the Vietnam War. Catherine of Siena walked the streets of the city when women were not permitted to walk the streets of the city feeding the poor. Hildegard of Bingen preached the word of justice to emperors and to popes. . . . A spiritual path that does not lead to a living commitment to the coming will of God, to the present Reign of God, to the Kingdom of God within and around us everywhere for everyone, is no path at all. . . .

From contemplation comes not only the consciousness of the universal connectedness of life, but the courage to model it as well. Those who have no flame in their hearts for justice, no consciousness of personal responsibility for the Reign of God, no raging commitment to human community may, indeed, be seeking God, but make no mistake, God is still at best only an idea to them, not a living reality.

Indeed, contemplation, you see, is a very dangerous activity. It not only brings us face to face with God, it brings us, as well, face to face with the world, and then it brings us face to face with the self; and then, of course, something must be done . . . because nothing stays the same once we have found the God within. We become new people, and in the doing, see everything around us newly too. We become connected to everything, to everyone. We carry the whole world in our hearts, the oppression of all peoples, the suffering of our friends, the burdens of our enemies, the raping of the earth, the hunger of the starving, the joyous expectation every laughing child has a right to. Then, the zeal for justice consumes us. Then, action and prayer are one.

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

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Week Forty-Three: Nonviolence

Women Working for Peace

Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee founded a women's nonviolent peace movement that helped stop the second Liberian civil war in 2003. One night she heard a clear spiritual call:

I had a dream.

I didn't know where I was. Everything was dark. I couldn't see a face, but I heard a voice, and it was talking to me—commanding me: "Gather the women to pray for peace!" . . .

In some ways, that dream [and] that moment, were the start of everything. We knelt down on the worn brown carpet and closed our eyes. "Dear God, thank you for sending us this vision," said Sister Esther. "Give us your blessing, Lord, and offer us Your protection and guidance in helping us to understand what it means."

My dream became the Christian Women's Peace Initiative. In April 2002, about twenty Lutheran women from local churches gathered to follow the message I'd been sent, praying each Tuesday at noon in the small upstairs chapel of the St. Peter's compound. Sometimes we fasted. Soon, other church women heard what we were doing and began to join us. "*Jesus, help us. You are the true Prince of Peace, the only one who can grant us peace.*" . . .

We lived in a closed, guarded box, and the most ordinary acts could bring down terrible punishment. . . . Nobody seemed willing to do anything. . . .

Now, finally, we women were going to take action.

Gbowee describes the tireless efforts of organizing for peace in a country that had undergone immense suffering, violence, and corruption:

Three days a week for six months, the women of WIPNET [Women in Peacebuilding Network] went out to meet with the women of Monrovia; we went to the mosques on Friday at noon after prayers, to the markets on Saturday morning, to two churches every Sunday. . . . We gave all our sisters the same message: Liberian women, awake for peace! . . .

It wasn't always easy. Women who have suffered for nearly as long as they can remember come to a point where they look down, not ahead. But as we kept working, women began to look up and listen. No one had spoken to them this way before.

We handed out flyers: WE ARE TIRED! WE ARE TIRED OF OUR CHILDREN BEING KILLED! WE ARE TIRED OF BEING RAPED! WOMEN, WAKE UP—YOU HAVE A VOICE IN THE PEACE PROCESS! . . .

As the women of WIPNET gathered together, my fear, depression and loneliness were finally, totally, wiped away. Others who felt the way I did stood beside me; I wasn't alone anymore. And I knew in my heart that everything I had been through, every pain, had led me to this point: leading women to fight for peace was what I was meant to do with my life.

Wednesday, 26 October 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Three: Nonviolence

God Is a Peacemaker

In New Mexico, where the CAC is located, there are two national nuclear laboratories. In a recent pastoral letter, Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe called for a conversation toward nuclear disarmament. He rooted his invitation in Jesus' teachings:

I invite us to reflect on how Jesus practiced nonviolence and how we can do the same in the United States.

When he began his public ministry, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). In part, he was saying the days of violence, injustice, war, and empire are coming to an end. We are invited to welcome God's reign of peace and live in God's universal love and nonviolence here and now.

In the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus commanded us to be peacemakers and to love our enemies, saying: "Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called the sons and daughters of God" (5:9). "You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' but I say to you: 'offer no violent resistance to one who does evil'" (5:38–39). "You have heard it said, 'Love your countrymen and hate your enemies.' But I say love your enemies and pray for your persecutors, then you will be sons and daughters of the God who lets

the sun rise on the good and the bad and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust" (5:43–45). In these teachings, Jesus says that God is a peacemaker, and since we are God's sons and daughters, we are peacemakers too, not warmakers. He says that God practices universal nonviolent love, and since we are the sons and daughters of the God of universal nonviolent love, we practice universal nonviolent love, too. There are no exceptions, no justifications for warfare, and no "just war theory."

Many would question these teachings as naïve, impractical, and idealistic. But as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote so well about this call to love our enemies, "Jesus is not an impractical idealist: he is the practical realist." [1] Dr. King also stated: Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, the command to love one's enemy is an absolute necessity for our survival. Love even for enemies is the key to the solution of the problems of our world. [2]

Archbishop Wester continues:

I invite us to have a conversation together about what it means to follow the risen, nonviolent Jesus, who calls us to be peacemakers, put down the sword, and love everyone, even the enemies of our nation. Certainly, these commandments challenge us to face the violence that is being prepared in our name here in New Mexico, and to start the process of nuclear disarmament so that no one ever again calls down hellfire from the sky. As Dr. King concluded, "May we . . . hear and follow [Jesus'] words—before it is too late." [3]

Thursday, 27 October 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Three: Nonviolence

Nonviolence: A Continual Practice

In today's meditation, Father Richard summarizes Martin Luther King Jr.'s principles of nonviolence:

1. Nonviolence is a way of strength and not a way for cowards. It is not a lack of power which allows us to be nonviolent, but in fact the discovery of a different kind of power. It is a choice, not a resignation; a spirituality, not just a tactic.
2. The goal of nonviolence is always winning the friendship and the understanding of the supposed opponent, not [their] humiliation or personal defeat. It must be done to eventually facilitate the process of reconciliation, and we ourselves must be willing to pay the price for that reconciliation. King based this on Jesus' lifestyle and death and on Ephesians 2:13–22 and Romans 12:1–2.
3. The opponent must be seen not so much as an evil person, but as a symbol of a much greater systemic evil—of which they also are a victim! We must aim our efforts at that greater evil, *which is harming all of us*, rather than at the opponent.
4. There is a moral power in voluntarily suffering for others. We call it the “myth of redemptive suffering,” whereas almost all of history is based on the opposite, the “myth of redemptive violence.” The lie that almost everybody believes is that suffering can be stopped by increasing the opponent's suffering. It works only in the short run. In the long run, that suffering is still out there and will somehow have to work its way out in the next generation or through the lives of the victims. A willingness to bear the pain has the power to transform and absorb the evil in the opponent, the nonviolent resister, and even the spectator. This is precisely what Jesus was doing on the cross. It changes all involved, and at least forces the powers that be to “show their true colors” publicly. And yes, the nonviolent resister is also changed through the action. It is called *resurrection* or *enlightenment*.
5. This love ethic must be at the center of our whole life, or it cannot be effective or real in the crucial moments of conflict. We have to practice drawing our lives from this new Source, in thought, word, emotion, and deed, every day, or we will never be prepared for the major confrontations or the surprise humiliations that will come our way.
6. Nonviolence relies on a kind of *cosmic optimism* which trusts that the universe/reality/God is finally and fully on the side of justice and truth. History *does* have a direction, meaning, and purpose. God is more fundamental than evil. *Resurrection*

will have the final word, which is the very promise of the Jesus event. The eternal wind of the Spirit is with us. However, we should not be naïve; and we must understand that most people's loyalties are with security, public image, and the comforts of the status quo.

Friday, October 28, 2022

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-Three: Nonviolence

Warriors for Peace

For those of us committed to nonviolence, what do we do with the warrior imagery in our religious traditions? Zen priest and activist angel Kyodo Williams writes about living with a nonviolent “warrior-spirit” inspired by the Buddha:

The man who became the Buddha was known as Gautama, and he was born into a warrior clan known as the Shakyas. . . .

But even before Gautama was born as a Shakya warrior, he had been a warrior of another kind. In previous lives, Gautama had been a *bodhisattva*. Bodhisattva means “awakening being” and refers to a person of any culture that is brave and willing to walk on the path of wakefulness. . . . They are awakening warriors that give up floating through life aimlessly and being concerned only with themselves. Awakening warriors live in a way that is of benefit to all, and their work is done here in this world. They see that we must all take responsibility for

ending suffering, not just for our own individual freedom, but for that of others as well. What these awakening warriors realize is that in order to live harmoniously and with joy, they must take their natural place in the world.

Does this mean that in order to live with more joy and grace and less fear and anger we need to run out and take up arms or develop aggressiveness and a warlike stance? Not at all. What we want to do is embody the spirit of a warrior and bring that to function in our daily lives. “Spirit” refers to that which gives life. “Warriors” live a life of action and clear direction. We can bring warrior-spirit to the cause of peace and harmonious connection because it is about life and living, not power and aggression. . . . Warrior-spirit is a frame of mind that lets us make a habit of cultivating the qualities and skills that are already available to all of us. [1]

Valarie Kaur of the Revolutionary Love Project understands her Sikh warrior tradition through a nonviolent lens that asks “Who will you fight for?” on behalf of justice and peace.

What does it mean to be a warrior-sage for a new time? Who will you fight for? What will you risk? It begins with honoring the fight impulse in you. Think about what breaks your heart. Notice what it feels like to have your fists clench, your jaw close, your pulse quicken. Notice what it feels like to want to fight back. Honor that in yourself. You are alive and have something worth fighting for. Now comes the second moment: How will you channel that into something that delivers life instead of death? Breathe. Think. Then choose your sword and shield. You don't have to know the answers. You just have to be ready for the moment when the world says: *Now*. [2]

Saint Luke, evangelist



BY PAT MARRIN



In the conventional list of the most inspiring and influential writers of all time, we are not likely to hear the name of St. Luke, but surely his Gospel stands as one of the most important documents ever written.

Luke's two-part history about Jesus and the growth of the early church (Acts) tells the story of God's plan to reclaim the world from sin and death by the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Luke's theology reflects the influence of St. Paul, who grasped and articulated the underlying Paschal Mystery of Jesus' passage through the cross to a New Creation in God.

This Gospel was a daring counter proclamation to the official Roman propaganda of the divine Caesar, son of

God, who saves the world and brings peace through conquest. Luke and Paul, like the early church itself as it expanded into the empire, were "lambs among wolves" for challenging the state religion. We do not know the fate of Luke, but Paul's presumed martyrdom at Rome showed how serious a threat Christianity was perceived by the empire.

If in today's headlines a single journalist can be brutally murdered for criticizing a despot, imagine the resistance an empire could bring down on a tiny movement that questioned its power as ruler of the known world. Depending on your point of view, all the early Christians were dangerous subversives, their religion an illegal cult made up of converted Jews, former slaves and social outcasts who threatened Rome's economic stability and social order.

The risks the early preachers took to spread the Gospel are alluded to in Luke's account of the sending out of the 72 disciples. They went not knowing whether they would be received or rejected. They traveled without resources, vulnerable and totally dependent on strangers. They might be reported and detained, just as Paul was on his travels through Galatia. Merchants and priests might object to their bold message of liberation from superstition and idols, or their claims about healing, as cutting into their livelihood and control of local populations.

We celebrate St. Luke the Evangelist by remembering his determination to share the Good News. His brilliant telling of the story of Jesus has captured the minds and hearts of millions of converts down through the ages. His emphasis on the mission of mercy, the dignity of women and the power of prayer has shaped the spirituality of the church and of how we all share in the ministry of Jesus. The story he told is the

story we now live. We honor Luke by living this story with courage and joy.

The traditional iconography that depicts the four evangelists is taken from the "four creatures" at the throne of God from Ezekiel and Revelations. Matthew is a winged man, Mark a winged lion, Luke a winged ox, and John an eagle. Luke as ox or bull is meant to symbolize sacrifice, service and strength.

Accountability



BY PAT MARRIN



"To whom much is given, much is expected" (Luke 12:48).

[Eph 3:2-12](#); [Luke 12:39-48](#)

We might apply Luke's parable of the steward in charge of the household to any church organization from diocese to parish. No doubt, Luke was writing for the early church as much as recalling Jesus' instructions to his Apostles 50 years earlier.

The early church had survived the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, which led to the great diaspora of both Jews and Christians into the Mediterranean world as far away as north Africa and Rome. Expectation of the parousia — the return of Jesus in glory — was in the air but slowly subsiding as church leaders realized that Jesus' Holy Spirit was at work in history for the long haul.

Yet the image of a "thief in the night" still warned church leaders to be vigilant. Jesus could come at any time, and those stewards who were taking their ease and abusing others would be held accountable. We catch glimpses of the culture of household servants (slaves) who were regularly beaten by their masters. It is hardly an antiquated example for today's world, proficient in exploiting workers and trafficking women and children.

For Luke, quoting Jesus, the point was that for those of us blessed by grace to focus our lives on Christ, vigilance is how we stay faithful in every season. Whether in crisis or in the long stretches of ordinary responsibility, do your duty, stay the course, know that God is always watching.

The evil of the day is sufficient thereof, as are the blessings. Those who have been entrusted with more will be held to a higher standard. So, live each day fully and do your best.

These readings surely offer sober counsel to all bishops and pastors at a time when scandal has tainted the public perception of Catholic clergy, in part because the behavior of some was allowed to happen, then covered up when reported to higher authority. Even 20 years after the Dallas Charter, a set of guidelines meant to prevent future abuses, instances of failure continue to plague the official church. To possess power over others has always proved to be a

source of temptation to lord it over others, something Jesus repeatedly warned his disciples against

The pastor, or good shepherd, leads from example and guides others with patience and encouragement. In the long history of the church, we call those kinds of gentle but persuasive leaders saints. Others who sought power, money and privilege from high office are seldom revered. Only with great humility should anyone seek leadership in the church. Jesus modeled service and suffering love as the sure path that accomplishes God's will.

At Sacred Heart University conference, theologians reengage with Vatican II



Massimo Faggioli of Villanova University speaks at an Oct. 13-15 conference at Sacred Heart University, "Vatican II and Catholic Higher Education: Leading Forward," which marked the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. (Sacred Heart University/Chris Zajac)



BY MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS

19 October 2022

Last week, Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut, marked the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council by hosting a wonderful conference, "Vatican II and Catholic Higher Education: Leading Forward." The school, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary next year, was a fruit of the council, the first Catholic university under lay leadership in the country.

The event was part of a growing body of evidence that a significant minority of U.S. Catholic theologians are reengaging with Vatican II, and ecclesiology more generally, in important ways.

[Massimo Faggioli](#) of Villanova University opened the proceedings and set the frame for the entire conference with a historical and theological reflection on the reception of Vatican II in Catholic higher education in the United States. Unsurprisingly, he invited the participants to honest self-criticism of their guild as well as pointing a way forward.



A Vespers service on Oct. 13 during Sacred Heart University's conference "Vatican II and Catholic Higher Education: Leading Forward" (Sacred Heart University/Chris Zajac)

Vatican II "assumed a robust relationship between theology and academia," Faggioli said. "The new literary genre of Vatican II texts, that is, non-legislative but narrative, required a sustained effort of cultural mediation between magisterium, the church and the world that was different from one of the most similar predecessors of Vatican II, the Council of Trent four centuries before."

Alas, in the United States, the relationship took a torpedo when Pope Paul VI issued his encyclical [*Humanae Vitae* in 1968](#).

"This was the beginning of an age of dissent which took different forms between the laity in the pews, the clergy and academic theology," Faggioli explained. "It was a dissent that, in its wisest forms, tried to distinguish carefully between different levels of authority of church teaching. It was the attempt at a loyal or faithful dissent, not an assault on church teaching or papal authority per se — quite different from the one we have seen in recent years against Pope Francis' pontificate."

'Catholic theology pays the price of a largely still ultramontane church which considers the popes (one pope only, of their choosing) the legal executors of the will of Vatican II.'

—Massimo Faggioli

Still, the documents of Vatican II remained a kind of common ground for theological discussion.

In the 1990s, however, Vatican II began to recede from the consciousness of American theology. A "process of mutual alienation" begins, with "a theological-political neoconservative revision of the effects of the council, in the name of an idealized past, in a defense of that recent pre-Vatican II past that many thought Vatican II had made unusable and against a liberal-American interpretation of the conciliar teaching." This revision became more radical in the current century with direct attacks on Vatican II itself.

On the left, a growing ignorance of the conciliar texts and of the event of the council itself began to dominate.

"It is not an attack against Vatican II, but a silent decoupling, a process of estrangement from the conciliar tradition in favor of the post-conciliar, in the sense not just of the post-confessional but also of the post-tradition or anti-tradition," Faggioli said. "This has causes that were both internal to academia (the precarious position of theology in Catholic colleges and universities; the system of academic recruitment and career) and external (understandable frustration with the perceived failure of the church to deliver on the promises of Vatican II). It is an indirect disqualification of Vatican II which creates a vacuum to be filled by other kinds of theological and academic programs."

Looking at the status of Vatican II today, Faggioli noted, "The Catholic theological project finds itself, in terms of church politics, between the Scylla of the German pope, criticized on the one hand as the theologian who stifled theological debate, and the Charybdis of the Argentine pope,

criticized by others as the 'street priest' from the Global South who mortifies intellectual precision."

Faggioli added, "Catholic theology pays the price of a largely still ultramontane church which considers the popes (one pope only, of their choosing) the legal executors of the will of Vatican II."

'We've witnessed the insinuation of the corporate lexicon into higher education, transposing deep questions of mission into grammars of innovation and vague notions of human flourishing.'
—Susan Reynolds

Emory University's Susan Reynolds delivered an excellent paper titled "What, for the University, Is Solidarity?: Catholic Higher Education and the Unfinished Reception of *Gaudium et Spes*."

Reynolds looked at the challenges facing those who seek to discern what solidarity means in the current Catholic academic world. She first cited the fact that "the modern corporate university is governed by tensions that militate against the possibility of solidarity with the poor. ... It is hard to extoll for students the virtues of what Jesuit Dean Brackley called downward mobility and then send them a tuition bill for \$75,000."

In addition to the bill, the influence of corporate life also afflicts ideas, Reynolds said. "We've witnessed the insinuation of the corporate lexicon into higher education, transposing deep questions of mission into grammars of innovation and vague notions of human flourishing." Touché.

The second challenge Reynolds noted was "the tendency toward misplaced perceptions of persecution." She did not spend much time on this theme and it certainly has something to say to ideological partisans of

both left and right. I hope she will return to it in the future.



Susan Reynolds, seen in the second row, second from right, attends the conference on Vatican II and Catholic higher education at Sacred Heart University Oct. 13 in Fairfield, Connecticut. (Sacred Heart University/Chris Zajac)

The bulk of Reynolds' talk, however, located the difficulty in applying Catholic ideas about solidarity to university life around "the fragmentary and unfinished reception of *Gaudium et Spes* in the U.S. ecclesial context."

She noted: "In the U.S. Catholic context, nearly six decades of reflection on the council and its outcomes have produced surprisingly little ecclesiological reflection on **what the council's vision of solidarity means for the church ad intra**, within itself" (emphasis in original).

There are many historical reasons for this fact but surely, as we mark the 60th anniversary of the council, the process of reception needs to connect some of these dots. It is time to overcome the fact that, "theologically, solidarity assumed a starring role in Catholic social thought and ethics, but it did not enter the postconciliar ecclesiological lexicon with the same force."

One of the best parts of Reynolds' talk was relating the idea of solidarity to that of

dialogue, a focus especially useful at this moment of ecclesial [synodality](#). "If solidarity describes the council's relational vision, then dialogue was its praxic corollary," she said.

The adoption of dialogue indicated a deeper change in ecclesial culture, too: "To center dialogue as a metaphor for the church's internal and external relationships, then, was to abandon in a gentle yet definitive way the defensiveness that had long characterized the church's stance toward the world." *Gaudium et Spes* is part of Vatican II's refutation of the 19th-century defensive crouch toward modernity.

St. Louis University's Grant Kaplan focused his paper on the challenge of handing on the Catholic intellectual tradition, and did so in light of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*.

"The larger project of conveying the Catholic intellectual and theological tradition, however, involves a paradox — wanting to hand on something that we come to know is deeper and broader than our grasp of it," he noted.

Handing it on entails "both a remembering and a forgetting, and an attempt to remember what has not just been forgotten, but dis-membered."



Participants in the conference on Vatican II and Catholic higher education receive Communion during Mass at the Chapel of the Holy Spirit at Sacred Heart University Oct. 14. (Sacred Heart University/Tracy Deer-Mirek)

Kaplan briefly examined some of the claims put forward by Yale theologian Willie James Jennings, who argues the Christian theological tradition, at least in its Aristotelian-Thomist iterations, has been thoroughly [enmeshed with racism](#) and colonialism. "Unfortunately, the use of tradition in theological education has most often been to promote white self-sufficient masculinity in search of a coherence that would make us safe from seeing our fragment work and conceal what the fragment aims toward: communion," Jennings wrote in *After Whiteness*.

Kaplan distills the moral stakes: "The critique articulated by Jennings brings into relief a serious question already implied: How can one ethically justify belonging to and retrieving a tradition so fundamentally entangled with something rotten?"

Still, the task of transmitting the tradition remains, and for Catholics it is an ecclesiological question, not merely a cultural one. Kaplan stated:

At this point, it suffices to say that *Dei Verbum* emphasizes not just what is handed down, but the activity and process of handing down. If the faith is not just a set of facts contained in a collection of texts, but instead a living reality, like a language, then the reality handed down has a way of bridging or collapsing time. ... If my family were the last family, say, to speak Cajun in Louisiana, and I did not pass it down to my children, it would cease to be a living language. In a similar way, the faith is a living faith and the Gospel is a "living Gospel."



From left: Fr. Anthony Ciorra, vice president for mission and Catholic identity at Sacred Heart University; Grant Kaplan of St. Louis University; and NCR columnist Michael Sean Winters are seen at the conference "Vatican II and Catholic Higher Education: Leading Forward" on Oct. 13. (Sacred Heart University/Chris Zajac)

In the case of the Catholic faith, two great councils addressed this issue of handing on tradition, Trent and Vatican II, and between those two events there was "a lively discussion in the theology of tradition, linked with efforts to give an account of dogmatic development and to reckon with the impact of modern historical scholarship on Catholic theology's dogmatic and normative claims." Kaplan focused on the work of German theologian Johann Sebastian von Drey (1777-1853), one of the founders of the Catholic school at Tübingen.

Kaplan's treatment of Drey was fascinating, and what I found most memorable was this quote from Drey addressing the necessity of ecclesial tradition:

If scripture alone is accepted as the means of the tradition of the ideas of religious belief, then the whole of theology is exegesis. But if there exists a living objective reality which is generally recognized as the continuance of the originating event and therefore its most authentic tradition, then

the historical witness is found in and through it. The Church is just such a manifestation.

So much for *sola scriptura*.

Drey was new to me, but Kaplan showed how the 19th-century ideas of the Tübingen school made their way to Vatican II via the *ressourcement* theologians of the mid-20th century. Finally, at the council, the idea that our Catholic understanding of tradition is of a living tradition, not a mere textual one, is affirmed, and in ways distinct from that of Trent.

Kaplan stated, "Free from the polemical urgencies that prompted the Council of Trent, the authors of *Dei Verbum* were not primarily motivated to defend the legitimacy of tradition as a source, and could thus emphasize its dynamism: 'The Tradition from the Apostles makes progress in the Church with the help [*assistentia*] of the Holy Spirit. There is growth in insight into the realities and words handed down [*verborum traditorum*].' "

This sense of history permitted the church to be open to the modern world in ways not possible previously, and still idiosyncratic for those stuck in a fundamentalist conception of Scripture.

'Does Catholic higher education in 2022 really understand the Vatican II call to solidarity with the poor and afflicted?'

—Patricia McGuire

Trinity University President Patricia McGuire gave the final keynote, in which she focused not so much on how Vatican II affects curriculum, but the "who" and the "how" of Catholic higher education.

"Does Catholic higher education in 2022 really understand the Vatican II call to

solidarity with the poor and afflicted, a call that echoes across the years through Vatican documents, including *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and more recently in the encyclicals and statements of Pope Francis?" McGuire asked.

She then presented data to indicate the answer is not reassuring. McGuire's paper really requires the reproduction of charts, and so I hope it will be published. Her comments — and her [track record at Trinity](#) — paint a path forward that is a challenge to all.

Something is happening in Catholic theological circles, something important, a reengagement with ecclesial institutions and with ecclesial language and ideas. It is dawning on a number of Catholic scholars that there can be no ecclesial reform apart from Vatican II, so they must reacquaint themselves with both the documents and the event, yes, even with the spirit of Vatican II.

Kudos to Sacred Heart University Professor Michelle Loris, President John Petillo and the Lilly Fellows Program for hosting this important event, bringing together scholars from the center-right and the center-left to engage in such a stimulating, self-critical and fecund conversation.



Professor Michelle Loris speaks during Sacred Heart University's conference on Vatican II and

Catholic higher education conference Oct. 13. (Sacred Heart University/Chris Zajac)

In addition to the Sacred Heart gathering, the recent [conference](#) at Boston College to honor the work of Professor Richard Gaillardetz, and especially Gaillardetz's talk, urged this kind of theological reengagement with the church itself.

So, too, does a new research project from the Migrants and Refugees Section at the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, "[Doing Theology from the Existential Peripheries](#)." The project launched earlier this month and includes the work of theologians around the world.

Future historians can better determine why academic theology in the U.S. became so estranged from conciliar thought and from ecclesial decision-makers. The important thing now is to seize the momentum and build on it. Carpe diem.

There can be no ecclesial reform outside of Vatican II, period. Not all Catholic theologians need to be ecclesiologists, but Catholic theologians who do not care about ecclesiology at all are not really doing Catholic theology. They are doing something else.

The church needs to improve annulment process for domestic violence victims



BY CHARLES W. DAHM

21 October 2022

How are survivors of domestic violence treated by Catholic marriage tribunals, the diocesan courts that determine whether the sacramental bond of a marriage exists or not? Sadly, if domestic violence is involved, the process can be painful, not pastoral, and often ineffective.

As a pastor who has worked in [domestic violence ministry](#) for decades, allow me to share some stories.

An undocumented, immigrant woman met and married her husband in Chicago. From the very day of their marriage, he isolated her. She could not work, go to school, shop for food or even buy her own clothing without her husband accompanying her. Years later she sought my assistance.

Pastoral counseling as well as proper social work protocol dictate that the counselor believe the victim. When this woman applied for annulment, however, she had to provide testimonies to substantiate her claims of abuse. Because she had no family in the United States and no friends to back up her claims of abuse and did not know the location of her former husband, the judge felt she could not substantiate her claims and the annulment process dragged on.

Another female survivor came to me for advice. She had divorced her abusive husband and met a man she wanted to marry. When she tried to fill out the lengthy annulment questionnaire, she couldn't proceed. It was too painful to reflect on and recount the abuse she had experienced. She felt retraumatized. She abandoned the annulment process, remarried in civil court and stopped going to Communion for 17 years. No one at the marriage tribunal ever followed up to find out what happened to her.

Another woman called me recently about how her judge wrote in his denial of the annulment that her claims of domestic abuse at the hands of her husband were not justified because her behavior caused her husband's immoral acts. Anyone familiar with the dynamics of domestic violence recognizes this assessment as grossly mistaken. The abusing spouse is solely responsible for his abusive behavior, never the victim.

Despite statistics from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) that show that 41% of women and 26% of men experience sexual or physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetimes, most Catholic clergy and diocesan tribunal judges and advocates (volunteer lay people who assist with the annulment process) receive no education or training about domestic violence. Yet some estimates from canon lawyers suggest that nearly half of annulment cases involve domestic violence.

This lack of education as well as the discretionary power of tribunal judges can lead to very harmful results. Clearly, church authorities need to evaluate the practices of diocesan marriage tribunals and make appropriate reforms to render the process more accessible, more compassionate and

more effective. The recent growing appreciation for trauma and its long-term negative effects require a rethinking of tribunal services.

According to Catholic teaching, a sacramental marriage is legitimately established by the free expression of mutual consent of a man and woman before a Catholic priest or deacon. Once established, a permanent bond is formed that cannot be broken, even by the pope. This indissolubility stems from a theology of Catholic marriage based on New Testament texts. Most notable is Jesus' teaching: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ... What, therefore, God has joined together let no one separate" ([Matthew 19:4-9](#)).

St. Paul argues the marriage bond is indissoluble because it reflects the relationship between Christ and the church, a permanent and unbreakable relationship ([Ephesians 5:21-33](#)). Moreover, the Catholic Church asserts the sacramental bond was forged by God, reflecting God's love for humankind, which is permanent. Although some theologians challenge this interpretation, the official teaching of indissolubility has endured from the earliest times of Christianity.

But certain conditions are necessary to establish the marriage bond, and if marriage lacks one or more of these conditions at the time of the wedding, it is null. These justifiable "grounds" for an annulment include dishonest presentation of one's person and/or intentions or deliberate deceit; force or fear of force; a cognitive error or ignorance about the nature of a sacramental marriage; lack of sufficient use of reason; or physical or emotional incapacity to assume the essential obligations of marriage.

Canon lawyers are quick to point out that any of these grounds, including moral turpitude or abuse that occurs after the wedding, do not constitute grounds for a declaration of nullity if there is no indication of its existence before the marriage. But the reality of domestic violence is that abusers commonly groom their victims over time, including during courtship and the first years of marriage. Abusive men rarely reveal their plan for power and control before the wedding. The abusive spouse may not even be aware he or she is grooming their partner to be submissive to the abuse. Many women do not see the abuse until years after the wedding.

Improvement is necessary, partly to better serve petitioners, notably victims of domestic violence, and partly to demonstrate that the church is faithfully carrying out the compassionate ministry of Jesus Christ.

Marriage tribunals normally consider grounds for annulment revealed shortly after the wedding to have existed at the time of the wedding. For example, the man who is unfaithful to his wife one week after the wedding (not an exaggeration; it happens) or the husband who strangles his wife on their honeymoon (that also happens) or spouses who one month after the wedding reveal they do not want children. Most tribunals would consider these actions to indicate that the grounds existed at the time of the wedding.

But what if these grounds were not revealed until two or more years after the wedding? Would they still be sufficient grounds or would they just be considered a moral flaw that developed after the wedding? Victims often do not recognize abusive behavior until years after their wedding. Of course, many judges do their best to search for signs that the abuse preexisted the wedding, but if they don't find them, they will deny the

annulment. Yet a proper understanding of domestic violence postulates that even if the signs of abuse were not evident before the marriage, the roots of abuse were there, albeit unknown to the victim and even the perpetrator.

Additionally, although some tribunal judges claim that the annulment process of historical review and analysis is healing for petitioners, many who work with victims believe it often retraumatizes them. Both assertions are based on anecdotal reports. Unfortunately, research to determine the prevalence and conditions under which each occurs is lacking. And, more importantly, most judges are unprepared to recognize and respond to re-traumatization.

Of course, there have been other criticisms of annulment process, some quite cynical, claiming that if someone has enough money or influence, a marriage tribunal will grant the annulment no matter the grounds. [Pope Francis has tried to reform](#) only the application process, not its legal standards, urging tribunals to simplify procedures, expedite decisions and eliminate fees.

But the process is still burdensome, and a large percentage of applicants abandon the process. Some fill out the initial application but never return to their parish or respond to the tribunal to finish the process. Even if they do try to respond, they may be uncomfortable or confused by the subsequent lengthy questionnaire or find the questions too painful to answer. Also, failure to obtain the required three witnesses to provide supporting testimony can doom the petitioners' request.

Unfortunately, marriage tribunals generally keep no records about how many drop out of the process and why. There is little to no follow-up, even though it is commonly recognized that a large percentage of

applicants abandon the process. Data would help us better understand how the annulment process is succeeding or failing and could improve it. We should also recognize many people never even apply for an annulment because they fear the process or believe it a sham. But, again, there is no data to guide improvement.

And improvement is necessary, partly to better serve petitioners, notably victims of domestic violence, and partly to demonstrate that the church is faithfully carrying out the compassionate ministry of Jesus Christ. The education of judges and advocates should include formation in the dynamics of domestic violence. Church authorities also need to standardize processes and supervise their implementation to avoid the discrepancy between those diocesan tribunals acting liberally and others ruling harshly. Also, data should be systematically collected and analyzed about the number and kinds of cases submitted, the number and reasons for dropping out of the process, and the number and reasons for granting and denying the annulment. And, finally, this data and its corresponding evaluations should be made public information to the faithful.

**US bishops
pioneered a self-
serving invocation of
'religious liberty'**



The audience gathers at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio for the Oct. 7-8 conference "Restoring A Nation: The Common Good in the American Tradition." (NCR photo/Brian Fraga)



BY DANIEL P. HORAN

20 October 2022

Last week, I read a guest essay in The New York Times by Steven Paulikas, an Episcopal priest in Brooklyn, titled "[Same-Sex Marriage Is a Religious Freedom](#)." As a member of the Anglican Communion and an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church, Paulikas was able to say without reservation that his "wedding was an exercise of the freedom not only to be married under equal protection of the law but also to practice our religion."

Obviously, the Roman Catholic position is different, as it does not currently recognize the sacramental validity of same-sex marriages. And yet, since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church does recognize the fundamental human right to religious freedom.

As the church's Declaration on Religious Freedom, [Dignitatis Humanae](#), states, "The human person has a right to religious

freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits."

While the Roman Catholic Church would not internally recognize the sacramental validity of same-sex marriage, this theological and disciplinary practice of restricting marriage *ad intra* exists in tension with the church's affirmation of the fundamental human right that exists for others to exercise their own religious traditions, including equal access to marriage within their churches and a pluralistic, constitutional society.

However, as Paulikas rightly notes about the current social and political climate in the United States, "a powerful political, legal and social movement is poised to prevail in its mission to relegate the marriages of L.G.B.T.Q. people to second-class status in name of 'religious freedom.' It seems its true goal is not to advance its advocates' religious freedom but to restrict ours."

Many Catholic leaders, politicians, academics and ordinary people alike are part of this anti-religious-liberty movement, oftentimes claiming without irony to do so in the name of "religious freedom."

From a Catholic perspective, it is also important to note that religious freedom is a relatively new part of the universal teaching of the church, something that can only be traced back to the 1962-65 Second Vatican Council (note to those inclined to invoke the teaching yet reject the council). Therefore, there is also a clear theological and pastoral need to clarify how it is being understood and deployed.

Since at least the social and political battles over the Affordable Care Act more than a decade ago, the U.S. bishops' conference has invoked "religious freedom" to [justify its personal objection](#) to certain policies such as medical contraceptive coverage through insurance for employees.

The church itself teaches that all people have "a right to religious freedom" and that, as both *Dignitatis Humanae* and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, [Gaudium et Spes](#), state, even Catholic Christians have recourse to their consciences. Rather than recognize this, the bishops have instead sought to impose their religious views on others.

It seems that in recent years this sort of distorted and self-serving invocation of "religious freedom" has been used in more solipsistic and discriminatory ways. Such appears to have been the case with the agenda and lineup of speakers at a conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, earlier this month.

As my NCR colleague Brian Fraga [reported](#), despite their different contexts and backgrounds (from university professors to media personalities to political candidates), the presenters shared a common sense of victimhood in decrying the current state of a pluralistic nation in which the right to religious freedom is enshrined in its constitution.

Fraga wrote: "Disaffected by secularization, social media censorship, the legal recognition of same-sex marriage and the widening societal acceptance of LGBTQ rights, the conference speakers described an America in crisis, where tyrannical forces in 'Big Tech,' media, academia, government and industry are cracking down on and isolating social conservatives and religious traditionalists in the United States."

In the post-Trump age, it should come as no surprise that many of those who share his political and ideological views are immune to the shame associated with rank hypocrisy. That is why I was not at all surprised to read that, as Fraga reported, "though the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment prohibits the establishment of an official state religion, several of the conference's Catholic speakers articulated their dissatisfaction with a religiously neutral American civil society."

The same people who work themselves up to a fever pitch about how their religious freedom is under attack are using the language of religious freedom to deny precisely this constitutional right to others.

Today, it seems that within many Catholic circles 'religious freedom' is only invoked by those who wish to suppress the rights and freedoms of others who may disagree with them.

Not only are such attitudes anti-American and unconstitutional, but they also fly in the face of the church's teaching about the inherent dignity and value of all people, especially in their fundamental right to exercise their religious freedom.

It strikes me as dangerous that self-identified Catholics, especially those in public office and positions of influence, are espousing such views. For as much as the U.S. bishops' conference is concerned with theological "coherence" around subjects like the Eucharist, and have pledged to spend millions of dollars putting on events related to this topic, there seems to be zero willingness to address the incoherence around religious freedom as it is on display at the Steubenville conference and beyond.

Part of the reason this is the case is because the bishops helped pioneer this self-serving strategy during its public fight with the

Obama administration's effort to provide affordable health care for millions of Americans. On what authority could they prevent or stop others from using their same discursive playbook, adapting the language of "religious freedom" to play victim while advocating for policies and actions that suppress the rights and religious freedom of others?

Today, it seems that within many Catholic circles "religious freedom" is only invoked by those who wish to suppress the rights and freedoms of others who may disagree with them. But the core of both the American constitutional right and the Catholic Church's teaching is that religious freedom is not a zero-sum game, but a way of being in relationship with others and organizing a society rooted in an authentic understanding of the common good — where all people can live with their inherent dignity and value recognized.

Paulikas is correct, not just about his own fundamental civil and religious right to marry his spouse, but also about so many other instances in which historically minoritized, marginalized and oppressed communities of individuals are facing renewed threats of discrimination and violence because of this kind of dangerous rhetoric couched in the clothing of "religious freedom."

Parolin to EWTN: Unity with Francis necessary for Catholic media



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, is pictured in a 1 January 2021, photo. Media outlets that identify as Catholic must live "in a spirit of communion" with the pope, Cardinal Parolin said during a gala dinner for EWTN's Europe-based staff in Frascati, Italy, 19 October 2022. (CNS/Vatican Media)



BY CHRISTOPHER WHITE

Vatican Correspondent

Rome — 21 October 2022

The Vatican's top diplomat has called on the U.S.-based media conglomerate Eternal Word Television Network, which regularly criticizes Pope Francis, to make "communion with the Pope be the distinctive sign" of the operation's work. Catholic media, said Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, can be an active part of church life "first of all by living in a spirit of communion with the Bishop of Rome."

"This is all the more urgent today in a time marked by overly-dramatic debates, also within the Church, which do not even spare the person and the Magisterium of the Pontiff," he added.

Parolin, who serves at the Vatican's secretary of state, delivered his remarks at

the invitation of EWTN, as the network is known, at a meeting of its European affiliates in Frascati, Italy, on Oct. 19. His remarks were published [by the Vatican](#) on Oct. 21.

"The means of communication, even more so if they purport to highlight their Catholic identity, must strive not to spread hate, but rather, to promote a non-hostile communication," the cardinal said.

In recent years, EWTN, which also owns the National Catholic Register and Catholic News Agency — and is one of the Catholic Church's largest media enterprises — has become known for its [regular antagonistic coverage of Francis](#) and partisan political focus, often supportive of former U.S. President Donald Trump.

Most notably, one of its leading hosts, Raymond Arroyo, has [regularly promoted and interviewed](#) the schismatic former papal ambassador to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò. Viganò previously has called for Francis' resignation.

In September 2021, during a trip to Slovakia, Francis himself [offered](#) a thinly-veiled criticism of the network, saying that while he may be worthy of personal scrutiny, the church does not deserve attacks such as those regularly made by the media outlet.

"There is, for example, a large Catholic television channel that has no hesitation in continually speaking ill of the pope," Francis said. "I personally deserve attacks and insults because I am a sinner, but the church does not deserve them. They are the work of the devil. I have also said this to some of them."

The remarks from Parolin, who is widely regarded as a cautious diplomat, mark a rare

occasion in the pope's nearly decadelong papacy that the Vatican has directly criticized the network, which [attests](#) to its commitment to "redemptive Catholic journalism."

"The truth is what distinguishes information from communication," was the theme of Parolin's address, in which he said "communion is in the DNA of communication."

"A communication that instead fans the flames of polarization, or builds walls instead of breaking them down, betrays its very nature," he added.

In addition to Arroyo's weekly show, EWTN regularly hosts a ["papal posse"](#) of commentators known for their anti-Francis views, including Fr. Gerald Murray, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, and author Robert Royal.

In his 2020 book [The Outsider: Pope Francis and His Battle to Reform the Church](#), British Vatican journalist Christopher Lamb reported that the Vatican's current ambassador to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, had expressed dissatisfaction to EWTN CEO Michael Warsaw over the network's coverage of the papacy.

Warsaw is [a consultant](#) to the Vatican's Dicastery for Communications, and Parolin greeted him during the opening remarks of his address.

As he concluded his remarks, the Italian cardinal said he hoped unity with the pope would be " 'felt' and 'touched' in your television broadcasts, as well as in your articles and in your multimedia programs."

"May every one of your viewers or readers recognize EWTN as a work of God at the

service of the truth, ecclesial communion, and the good of humanity," he concluded.

In Washington, D.C., Oct. 20, the day after Parolin's address, Arroyo [led](#) his weekly broadcast with an interview with [Auxiliary Bishop Athanasius Schneider](#) of Astana, Kazakhstan, one of Francis' most vociferous critics.

Study of priests shows distrust of bishops, fear of false abuse accusations

[NEWS](#)



Priests are seen during a special Mass for vocations at Cure of Ars Church in Merrick, N.Y., Aug. 4, 2022, the feast of St. John Vianney, patron of parish priests. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)



BY RHINA GUIDOS

Washington — 19 October 2022

A study of U.S. priests released Oct. 19 details clerics' "crisis of trust" toward their bishops as well as fear that if they were

falsely accused of abuse, prelates would immediately throw them "under the bus" and not help them clear their name.

The study "Well-being, Trust and Policy in a Time of Crisis" by The Catholic Project, written by Brandon Vaidyanathan, Christopher Jacobi and Chelsea Rae Kelly, of The Catholic University of America, paints a portrait of a majority of priests who feel abandoned by the men they are supposed to trust at the helm of their dioceses.

And while the study says priests overwhelmingly support measures to combat sex abuse and enhance child safety, the majority, 82%, also said they regularly fear being falsely accused. Were that to happen, they feel they would face a "de facto policy" of guilty until proven innocent.

The study, unveiled at The Catholic University of America in Washington, documents the environment between priests and their bishops in light of the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" instituted in 2002 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Commonly referred to as the Dallas Charter, it sets in place policy about how to proceed when allegations of sexual abuse of children by clergy or church personnel come to light.

"Indeed, many priests feel that the policies introduced since the Dallas Charter have depersonalized their relationship with their bishops; they see bishops more as CEOs, bureaucrats, and legalistic guardians of diocesan finances than as fathers and brothers," the study points out and quotes a diocesan priest saying: "Our archbishop is a remote figure. Not at all personable. Not approachable. He appears to be a busy CEO and religious functionary."

The document reveals that 40% of the priests who responded said they see the zero-tolerance policy as "too harsh" or "harsher than necessary," adding that it's too easy to lodge false claims of abuse against them. They feel bishops would not support a priest in the period necessary to prove his innocence.

"There's this sense ... that the bishops are against a priest who's been accused, rather than doing what the bishop must do but still supporting the priest," said one of the 100 priests that researchers interviewed in-depth.

"Most priests agree with the church's response to the abuse crisis, but also fear that their bishops wouldn't have their backs if they were falsely accused," said Vaidyanathan, one of the study's authors.

Of the 10,000 diocesan and religious priests surveyed, just 24% said they had confidence in U.S. bishops in general. Instead, priests in the study said they predominantly see the prelates as social climbers, careerists and administrators who barely know priests in their diocese by name.

"I don't really trust most of the bishops, to be honest with you. I'll show them all a great amount of respect. And if I was in their diocese, I would really serve them and try," a priest told researchers. "But just looking across the United States and looking across a lot of bishops ... I would say I have an overall negative opinion of bishops in the United States.

"They're really not leaders or they're just kind of chameleons ... looking to climb up the ladder."

The study says 131 bishops also participated in the study, which analyzed attitudes about priests' well-being, trust and the policy related to the sex abuse crisis.

In response to the study, the USCCB's Public Affairs Office released a statement by Bishop James Checchio of Metuchen, New Jersey, chairman of the organization's Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations.

"I am grateful for the insight provided by this study which will assist the bishops in our ministry to our priests. While not surprised, I am heartened that the results report priests have such a high level of vocational fulfillment and that they remain positive about their priestly ministry," Checchio said in the Oct. 19 statement.

Referring to a figure in the document showing that 77% of the priests in the study could be categorized as "flourishing," saying they felt fulfilled and had a sense of meaning and purpose, with 4% reporting they were thinking of leaving the priesthood.

"Our priests are generous and committed," Checchio continued. "While acknowledging that circumstances will vary from diocese to diocese, the findings of this study are overall valuable in that they remind us of the importance of being always attentive to the care of our priests with the ever-growing stressors they experience in ministry, while we strive to address any issues that have damaged the unique relationship we enjoy."

The study says that the "erosion of trust between a priest and his bishop" affects the level of well-being of a priest, and those with more trust fare better than others.

It also points out a great disparity of perception between the two groups, with bishops overwhelmingly seeing their role as more supportive of clerics. The majority of bishops surveyed said that they felt their role was akin to a brother, a father, a shepherd, a co-worker, when it came to dealing with priests.

Priests said strengthening relationships with bishops, having more social interaction with them, have the prelates know their names, communication, transparency about processes, as well accountability on prelates' part would help alleviate the existing erosion of trust.

"The hope is that if we were to do the same survey five years from now, things would look different," Stephen White, of The Catholic Project, said in a statement released before the presentation.

"Priests are happy in their vocations, but we also want them to feel less anxious and more supported. I know the bishops want that too. Hopefully this data can help in that regard," he said.

Priests in the study also said they felt like cogs in the wheel, seen by bishops as liabilities. Some of the attitudes varied between diocesan priests and those who belong to a religious community, with those who were part of a religious order reporting more support.

The study also said that "at least some" of the mistrust comes from the way priests see "the application of policies created in the wake of the abuse crisis," even as some bishops helped cover up abuses or were accused of being abusers themselves.

"Perhaps some bishops see themselves through rose-colored glasses," a summary of the study said. "Or perhaps priests, in a beleaguered and prolonged state of stress and uncertainty, unfairly characterize their bishops through a lens of cynicism and fear. Or perhaps there is some truth to both perspectives."

4 reasons Catholic social teaching can't unite the US church



Andrew Abela, dean of the Busch School of Business at The Catholic University of America in Washington, speaks Feb. 14, 2020, during a conference at the university on "Bringing Your Faith To Work." (CNS/Courtesy of Catholic University of America)



BY MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS

24 October 2022

I have already undertaken two columns on the U.S. bishops' national synthesis of synodal reports, the [first](#) praising the synthesis for its candor and comprehensiveness, and the [other](#) focusing on the need to move forward by engendering an ad extra focus, mindful of Pope Francis' insight that a self-referential church becomes ill.

This second column generated some interesting conversations that now require me to dive back into the topic. Specifically, the synthesis states: "Synodal consultations acknowledged that 'the Church needs to help parishioners understand the connection

between Catholic social teaching and outreach beyond the borders of the parish.' "

The question that arose in conversations with other Catholic observers is this: Can Catholic social teaching unite the church in the United States or not?

The short answer is: No. For a variety of reasons, at least in this country, Catholic social teaching cannot yet be a source of ecclesial unity. Why?

The first is that a group of conservative thinkers have been trying to rewrite Catholic social teachings in a different, more neoliberal manner. Starting with Michael Novak's [The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism](#), through Fr. Richard John Neuhaus' founding of the magazine *First Things* and the tendentious effort by both men in concert with George Weigel to summarize the Pope John Paul II teachings in [Centesimus Annus](#), the neocons minimized the many and repeated cautions papal and conciliar teaching delivered against capitalism and highlighted the conditional endorsements of private property without mentioning the conditions. Weigel's bizarre [analysis](#) of Pope Benedict's [Caritas in Veritate](#) — he suggested ignoring the parts of the encyclical with which he disagreed — represented the high water mark of [neocon hubris](#).

Catholic social teaching must be presented as one kind of moral teaching, every bit as rooted in our doctrinal and scriptural traditions as other areas of moral teaching.

Massimo Borghese's magnificent book *Catholic Discordance*, which I [reviewed](#), details the distortions these three men perpetrated on the teachings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Yet how many diocesan newspapers continue to publish Weigel's columns? Anyone want to give odds on how

many bishops read Weigel's biography of John Paul II compared to Borghese's carefully argued book?

The bishops' own university, the Catholic University of America, goes beyond even the distortions of the neocons, [aligning](#) itself with the Napa Institute in founding a business school where full-blown libertarian economics is celebrated.

The second reason Catholic social teaching can't unite Catholics in the U.S. is that our politics tends to define our identities and shape our ideas more than our religion. This has happened among both liberal and conservative Catholics, and it grew from an understandable and even laudable effort by our forebears to assimilate to mainstream U.S. culture. They succeeded a little too well, imbibing Protestant ideas about religion being a private thing and liberal ideas about a putative neutral public square.

How many times, in casual conversation, say with someone seated next to you on an airplane or at a town meeting, have you heard someone say, "You can't legislate morality"? All legislation is, in some sense, a legislation of morality. How many times does a Catholic articulate a position in which she makes no reference to any received dogma, but her argument is still dismissed because "You can't mix religion with politics"?

The New York Times has long practiced a low-wattage anti-Catholic bigotry that now manifests itself in the paper's propensity to [publish only those Catholics who fit their caricature of a Catholic](#) in the public square.

And, now, due to the exodus of liberal Catholics, those who worship at Sunday Mass are increasingly likely to subscribe to a political gospel that has little in common with Catholic social teaching.

Nor are the people in the pews likely to hear a sermon about Catholic social teaching, which is the third reason it can't serve to unite us. Most young priests know little about Catholic social teaching, have trouble relating it to the Sunday readings, and are inclined to select catechetical materials that emphasize charity but not justice, and sexual not economic morality.

Catholic social teaching can't stand alone, separated from 2000 years of Catholic teaching.

Now, to be clear, Catholic social teaching can and should help Catholics discern how to engage in the kind of ad extra engagement the church needs. It can and should show us how to engage the world. But, starting with our theology schools and our bishops, we need to connect the dots for our seminarians and for the people in the pews.

The place to start is charity. Here is something that really does unite Catholics. Biden voters and Trump voters all line up to support the charitable work of the church. Charity, however, is not the same as justice. In the common sense of the word, charity is insufficient. In the theological virtue sense of the word, charity goes beyond justice. Maybe the people collecting bottles and cans for the parish Boy Scouts don't connect their activity with their theology, but that is why God invented preachers.

Second, Catholic social teaching must be presented as one kind of moral teaching, every bit as rooted in our doctrinal and scriptural traditions as other areas of moral teaching. It should be related to other teachings.

In September, I collaborated with several theologians on a Catholic social teaching seminar in Warsaw, sponsored by the U.S. bishops' conference. One paper looked at

Catholic social teaching and Christian anthropology, and another at Catholic social teaching and our teaching on family life. A third focused on Catholic social teaching and civic engagement. The papers were very well received precisely because, taken together, they provided a link — or a map, choose your metaphor — to see Catholic social teaching as integral to Catholic theology.

Third, we need to develop our tradition of Catholic social teaching. It is exceedingly rich when it comes to analyzing issues of economic justice, but is far less developed when it comes to politics. The starting place is obvious: the three documents of Vatican II — *Gaudium et spes*, *Dignitatis humanae* and *Nostra Aetate* — which repudiated the hostility to modernity evidenced in the [Syllabus of Errors](#). In them we see the seeds of a coherent theology of politics, one that provides a distinctly Catholic understanding of concepts such as rights, democracy and pluralism.

Finally, we need to admit the limits of Catholic social teaching. The quest for justice is, as the 1971 synod of bishops taught, constitutive of proclaiming the Gospel. But in front of the dead bodies in Ukraine, our Gospel has more to say than that their deaths were unjust. The promise of the resurrection, not the promise of societal reform, is the heart of the Gospel, especially in such moments. The truth is we humans fight for justice in every generation and the struggle seems endless. The "prince of peace" has evidently not brought peace to the world.

In the first book of his beautiful trilogy on Jesus of Nazareth, Pope Benedict XVI wrote:

The great question that will be with us throughout this entire book: What did Jesus

actually bring if not world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world? What has he brought? The answer is very simple: God. He has brought God. He has brought the God who formerly unveiled his countenance gradually, first to Abraham, then to Moses and the Prophets, and then in the Wisdom Literature — the God who revealed his face only in Israel, even though he was honored among the pagans in various shadowy guises. It is this God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the true God, whom he has brought to the nations of the earth. He has brought God, and now we know his face, now we can call upon him. Now we know the path that we human beings have to take in this world. Jesus has brought God and with God the truth about our origin and destiny: faith, hope and love.

Our great tradition of Catholic social teaching must be seen to be derivative from this faith in the person of Jesus, or else we risk becoming an NGO with hymnody. If the people in the pews are to believe in Catholic social teaching, and believe enough that they are willing to challenge the ambient political culture, that teaching must be rooted in this path of faith, hope and love. It must be seen to come forth with Jesus from the now empty tomb. Then, and only then, will it become a source of unity with the Catholic Church in the United States.

Can Pope Francis survive the scheming of 'the schismatics'?



Pope Francis in a wheelchair attends his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Oct. 5. (AP/Alessandra Tarantino)



BY PHYLLIS ZAGANO

21 October 2022

"The schismatics" is not the name of a new Broadway musical, but it might as well be. Some senior cardinals, deeply unhappy with the 2021-2022 round of the Catholic Church's worldwide [Synod on Synodality](#), seem to want the entire project to go away. It will not.

The synod is projected to be a new-old way of being "church," a permanent recovery of how the church began and grew. Pope Francis plans it as a change that will outlast his papacy.

Even so, too many Catholics still have no idea what "synodality" means. No matter what the naysayers say, it is not a parliamentary event to vote on doctrinal matters of faith and morals. Rooted in the teachings and process of the Second Vatican Council, synodality is understood as "walking together" — a coming to consensus — about the renewal begun following the Second Vatican Council.



Australian Cardinal George Pell is interviewed in his home near the Vatican, 20 May 2021. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

Of course, synodality means nothing if a national conference of bishops, individual bishops, or pastors ignore the whole idea. Some of them believe that if they ignore the synodal process, they will be able to recover the past. They are the clerics who prefer the fiddle-back vestments and Latin Masses of their real or imagined pasts. They want women kept out of the sanctuary. They want lay people kept in their place.

These men simply hope the synod will go away. They may have paid it lip service, with secret invitation-only synod meetings and perfunctory reports. They may have thought they only had a year or so until a new pontificate would erase all this business about consulting the laity.

They are wrong.

Of course, a new pontificate is precisely what Francis' opposition hopes for. No doubt, the electioneering has begun. Leading the charge, or at least leveling the greatest charges against synodality, are Australian Cardinal George Pell and German Cardinal Gerhard Müller, both retired. Each has a palatial apartment from which to conspire just outside one of the Vatican's gates.

Pell is a Rome-educated former archbishop of Sydney and for a while the Vatican's economic overseer. In a recent National

Catholic Register essay, he dismissed current synodal processes, presenting the church's 21 councils as "examples of the Holy Spirit at work." His point: Only clerics can discern and decide. He calls the German synod process "suicidal."

Müller, whose term as head of the Vatican's doctrinal body ended as its document on synodality was being written, has long been critical of Francis' concept of synodality. Venting his ire in EWTN's Alabama studio with news anchor Raymond Arroyo recently, Müller called the synod a "hostile takeover of the church of Jesus Christ," adding: "We must resist."

Müller took aim at synod secretary Cardinal Mario Grech, whom he said had "no importance in academic theology," accusing him of "presenting a new hermeneutic of the Catholic faith." He underscored his argument, saying that only cardinals knew what they were doing in the Curia, and lay persons should not be involved in choosing bishops.



Newly elected Cardinal Gerhard Müller of Germany arrives during a consistory ceremony led by Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on 22 February 2014. (Alessandro Bianchi/Reuters)

Why all the controversy?

The synod's issues are well known — women in ministry, a married priesthood, the status of divorced-remarried persons and

considerations about homosexuality. These are the concerns of Catholics around the world. These are the synod opponents' concerns as well. They hope for a new pope.

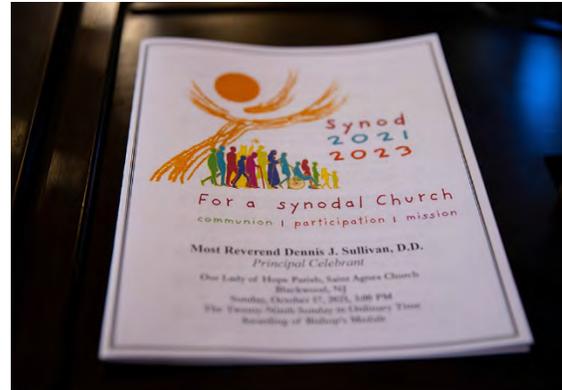
However, although Francis turns 86 this coming December, members of the opposition are also aging. Pell at 81 is too old to vote in a conclave; Müller is 74. But while they keep their apartments, they are well situated to gather like-minded cardinals in the sort of conspiratorial meetings not known since the Middle Ages.

Consider this: Both Müller and Pell were among 13 reported cardinal signers of a letter opposing the work of the 2015 Synod on the Family. Six of their fellow cardinal signers are still alive.

They are not kidding. They genuinely want to cancel synodality. They seem willing to lead their followers into schism just to get away from dealing with questions of the laity.

And their followers, a tiny portion of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics, happily support them through their media outlets and, more importantly, with their money. Francis, meanwhile, depends on the Holy Spirit.

A welcoming church enhances communion and participation



A program for a Mass opening the synod process in the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, is seen at St. Agnes Church of Our Lady of Hope Parish 17 October 2021, in Blackwood. Over several months reflections were collected from the faithful in parishes across the diocese and put before diocesan teams and deaneries as part of the churchwide preparation process for the 2023 world Synod of Bishops on synodality. (CNS/Catholic Star Herald/Dave Hernandez)



BY THOMAS REESE

21 October 2022

Clericalism cuts two ways, neither of which has been good for the church. Clerics, who believe they have all the answers and the power, tell the faithful what they can and cannot do. On the other side are laity, who nod off in the pews and leave the heavy lifting to priests and religious. The laity have never been asked to do anything but pray, pay and obey, so why bother?

That reality was sustainable, if not desirable, when there were lots of priests and religious and they were the most educated people in the parish. Today, most parts of the world have an educated laity and so few priests and religious that the church is in serious decline.

Pope Francis has made a frontal attack on clericalism, telling bishops not to act like princes and telling priests to be more pastoral. With the Synod on Synodality, he is also calling the laity to step up and take ownership in the church.

In this process, it is especially important that the clergy listen to the laity, but it is also important that the laity listen to each other.

The U.S. bishops' report on the work so far — officially the "[National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Diocesan Phase of the 2021-2023 Synod](#)" — released in September, summarizes 10 months of listening sessions in American parishes and dioceses.

Last month, I detailed in [my column](#) the enduring wounds that were exposed in the listening sessions. They include "the enduring wounds caused by the clergy sexual abuse scandal, the pandemic, polarization, and marginalization have exposed a deep hunger for healing and the strong desire for communion, community, and a sense of belonging and being united."

But the listening sessions were not simply picking at old wounds. They spoke of a longing for communion and participation in the church. The laity is waking from its slumber and desires "to draw closer to God and each other through a deeper knowledge of Scripture, prayer, and sacramental celebrations, especially the Eucharist," the bishops wrote.

While there were different perspectives on what constitutes good liturgy, there was agreement on the need for "warmer hospitality, healing services, and more invigorating preaching by clergy."

According to the synthesis, "The most common desire named in the synodal

consultations was to be a more welcoming Church where all members of the People of God can find accompaniment on the journey."

The participants in the sessions acknowledged the tension between walking with people while remaining faithful to the teachings of the church. Yet "for many, the perception is that the blanket application of rules and policies is used as a means of wielding power or acting as a gatekeeper."

Quoting from the account of one consultation, the bishops' synthesis said, "People noted that the Church seems to prioritize doctrine over people, rules and regulations over lived reality."

That account could have been quoting Francis when it said, "People want the Church to be a home for the wounded and broken, not an institution for the perfect. They want the Church to meet people where they are, wherever they are, and walk with them rather than judging them; to build real relationships through care and authenticity, not superiority."

Overall, the listening sessions showed no desire for a smaller, purer church. Catholics do not seem to want to exclude the wounded or sinners.

People needing to feel welcomed included, according to the synthesis, LGBTQ+ persons, who "believe they are condemned by Church teachings," and their families, who "feel torn between remaining in the church and supporting their loved ones."

Also divorced persons, "whether remarried or not, often feel unwelcome within the Church," according to the report. "The annulment process is experienced as unduly burdensome and judgmental." The divorced described "feeling like they are held to a higher standard while people who have

committed other sins continue to receive communion."

Catholic people of color "spoke of routine encounters with racism, both inside and outside the Church," the synthesis reports. "Indigenous Catholics spoke of the generational trauma caused by racism and abuse in boarding schools."

The participants offered practical suggestions for creating more community across racial and ethnic lines. "Providing forums for conversations on race, immigration, and loving openness to others is critical in allowing individuals to be heard and understood," was one. Masses in different languages were mentioned, but some wondered how to share communion with all parishioners even when they celebrate separately.

"Practically all synodal consultations shared a deep ache in the wake of the departure of young people and viewed this as integrally connected to becoming a more welcoming Church," according to the report. Young people "want the Church to speak out about issues that matter to them, especially justice, race, and climate change." The young want to be seen not as the future of the church but as important now. They want to be given a significant voice in the present.

Finally, those taking part in the process felt the church needs to be more welcoming to women, suggesting "a variety of ways in which women could exercise leadership, including preaching and ordination as deacon or priest."

Participants "shared a deep appreciation for the powerful impact of women religious who have consistently led the way in carrying out the mission of the Church," the synthesis reports. "There was a desire for stronger leadership, discernment, and

decision-making roles for women — both lay and religious — in their parishes and communities."

Overall, the listening sessions showed no desire for a smaller, purer church. Catholics do not seem to want to exclude the wounded or sinners. They prefer a welcoming community where all are called to communion and participation. The people appear to be in line with Francis' desire for a welcoming church that travels together along the synodal path.

None of this will be surprising to anyone familiar with survey research on the Catholic laity. What is new here is a papally endorsed process that allows the laity to surface their views in a public way.

The people are speaking. Is anyone listening?

Pope Francis pleads against nuclear war during interfaith event at Colosseum



Pope Francis presides over a prayer for peace with other Christian leaders inside Rome's Colosseum before joining other religious leaders launching an appeal for peace 25 October 2022. (CNS photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters)



BY CHRISTOPHER WHITE

Vatican Correspondent

Vatican City — 25 October 2022

Pope Francis on Oct. 25 joined an assembly of global political and religious leaders gathered at Rome's Colosseum to lament Russia's continuing invasion of Ukraine, saying that "peace has been gravely violated, assaulted and trampled upon" and warning against any possible use of nuclear weapons.

"Today, in fact, something we dreaded and hoped never to hear of again is threatened outright: the use of atomic weapons," said Francis.

The pope, who was joined by a host of interfaith leaders, turned to the words of Pope John XXIII, issued in 1962 at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis — when the world was then on the brink of nuclear destruction — saying the late pope's words are now his own.

"We plead with all government leaders not to remain deaf to this cry of humanity. Let them do everything in their power to safeguard peace," said Francis, quoting John. "They will thus spare the world the horrors of a war, the terrible consequences of which cannot be foreseen."

Francis' remarks came during the closing ceremony of the Oct. 23-25 "Cry for Peace" conference, hosted by the international [Community of Sant'Egidio](#), a lay-led Catholic social service organization based in Rome.

While Sant'Egidio has invited religious, political and cultural leaders from around the world to gather for dialogue and to pray for peace each year since St. John Paul II's interreligious prayer for peace in Assisi, Italy in 1986, this year's gathering took on particular urgency amid the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Since the start of the war in February, Francis has attempted to stake out a [cautious position](#) by strongly condemning the war and repeatedly expressing support for Ukraine, while at the same time [offering](#) to serve as a mediator with Russia and [saying](#) that he refuses to reduce the war to a conflict between "between good guys and bad guys."

Francis struck a similar tone during the Oct. 25 prayer service, saying "let us not fall into the trap of hatred for the enemy."

"Let us once more put peace at the heart of our vision for the future, as the primary goal of our personal, social and political activity at every level," the pope continued. "Let us defuse conflicts by the weapon of dialogue."

An emphasis on the importance of dialogue is a hallmark of the event's organizers' work.

Known as the "United Nations of Trastevere," a reference to the Roman neighborhood where it is headquartered, Sant'Egidio was founded in 1968 and has been instrumental in peace processes in place like Guatemala, Kosovo, and, most notably, Mozambique, where it [helped](#) bring about an end to the country's 16-year civil war.

On Oct. 23, France's President Emmanuel Macron — who opened the three-day Sant'Egidio conference in Rome —

repeatedly emphasized his country's ongoing support for Ukraine, while also expressing a desire to see the war reach its conclusion.

On Oct. 24, Macron met with Francis and afterwards, he [told reporters](#) that he had urged the pope to personally call both Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden to encourage them to engage in dialogue for the sake of peace in Ukraine.

"We need the United States to sit around the table to promote the peace process in Ukraine," said Macron, adding that he believed Biden has a "real relationship of trust" with Francis and that the pope could be of influence on him.

In early February, prior to the start of the war, Macron [traveled](#) to Moscow in a last minute bid to convince Putin not to invade Ukraine.

Eight months into the war, with no end in sight and rising energy costs across the world, there is some concern that the western-led coalition supporting Ukraine may be beginning to fracture. In Rome, at the start of the peace conference, Macron [said](#) it would be up to the Ukrainian people to decide the moment and terms of an eventual peace deal.

"Peace will be built with the other, who today is the enemy, around a table, and the international community will be there," he said, expressing his desire that Russia would one might be ready to acquiesce and reach a peace agreement.

At the Colosseum, Francis issued his own call for an immediate peace and doubled-down on his push for nonviolence.

"We are not 'neutral, but allied for peace,' and for that reason "we invoke the...right of

all to settle conflicts without violence," he said.

Even so, last month Francis [told reporters](#) that believed that other countries supplying Ukrainians with arms could be morally acceptable, as long as it is not done with the intention of furthering conflict.

"To defend oneself is not only licit, it is also an expression of love toward one's homeland," the pope said at the time.

But surrounded by political and religious leaders and the global peace activists gathered in Rome, the pope again made clear his desire for an end to the conflict.

"The plea for peace cannot be suppressed: it rises from the hearts of mothers; it is deeply etched on the faces of refugees, displaced families, the wounded and the dying," the pope said. "And this silent plea rises up to heaven. It has no magic formulas for ending conflict, but it does have the sacred right to implore peace in the name of all those who suffer, and it deserves to be heard."

"Let us never grow resigned to war," he concluded. "Let us cultivate seeds of reconciliation."

Change is not easy in the Catholic Church, whether Vatican II or Pope Francis



Deacon Jeremy Schupbach, a fourth-year seminarian who was assigned to St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Allen Park, Michigan, for the summer, sits in contemplation at the parish church July 27. (CNS/Detroit Catholic/Dan Meloy)



BY THOMAS REESE

27 October 2022

Sixty years ago, about a month after I entered the Jesuit novitiate in Los Gatos, California, the Second Vatican Council opened in Rome. No one bothered to tell the novices about it. The council went on for three years, during which I took vows and studied Latin and Greek without knowing what was happening at the council.

In those pre-Vatican II days, the novitiate was what sociologists call a "total institution," completely isolated from the rest of the world, with no access to newspapers, radio or television. Except when I went to the dentist, I did not talk to a woman outside my family for four years. The idea was to insulate us from the world so we could devote ourselves to our Jesuit formation.

For example, we were on retreat during the Cuban missile crisis, and no one bothered to

tell us what was happening. During one break in our studies, I found a discarded copy of U.S. News & World Report and read it from cover to cover before I realized it was a year old.

Somehow, I don't remember how, I heard the council had issued documents. Together with a classmate, I went to the rector of the house and asked if we could have copies of the documents of Vatican II. He said he would have to think about it and consult with some of the faculty.

They finally decided the two of us could have copies of the documents, but they would not be made generally available to our classmates. A month later, they were mandatory reading for everyone.

The rector was a wonderful man and a Shakespearian scholar who could recite hundreds of lines of Shakespeare from memory. The faculty were Latin and Greek scholars. They were totally out of touch with the modern world.

I relate this history to show how unprepared even many Jesuits were for the changes that would come because of the council. We had spent four years going to daily Mass in Latin and never expected to see the Mass in English. We were taught the church was perfect and did not need to change.

After four years of isolation in Los Gatos, I went to St. Louis University to study philosophy, and all hell broke loose. The Mass went into English, and we began receiving from the cup. Meanwhile the world was in chaos with war in Vietnam and racial conflict at home. Being on campus, we could no longer be isolated from the world.

Those in charge of Jesuit formation provided little guidance because they did not

understand what was happening either. It became difficult to see superiors as the voice of God when they were so clearly out of it.

After about five years, things eventually settled down; superiors were appointed who understood Vatican II. But the transition was tough. You felt like you were holding on to your vocation with your fingernails and with no safety net below. Many left.

Religious orders embraced Vatican II faster than did many dioceses. Religious orders are more adaptable to change than are dioceses. Bishops are appointed and stay in office until they are 75 years of age. Religious superiors are elected for set terms. In secular terms, you might say that religious orders are entrepreneurial, while dioceses are like state bureaucracies. Historically, change and reform come from religious orders not from the hierarchy.

Religious orders embraced Vatican II faster than did many dioceses. Religious orders are more adaptable to change than are dioceses.

I relate this history because, sadly, many seminarians and young priests have been going through the same transition again. During the papacies of John Paul and Benedict, diocesan seminaries returned to the pre-Vatican II model of isolation from the world. They were again told the church had all the answers, and it was their job when they became priests to whip the laity into shape. They have even been taught to love the old Latin Mass.

Then Francis came along and, like John XXIII, opened the windows to let fresh air into the church. Sadly, the people running the diocesan seminaries were as unprepared for Francis as mine were for Vatican II. Their bishops were as out of it as were my superiors.

Once again, religious orders were quicker to embrace change under Francis than were dioceses.

New Vatican synod document mentions women's ordination, LGBTQ relationships

Text, titled 'Enlarge the space of your tent,' reckons with taboo topics to ensure 'no one is excluded'

VATICAN



Pope Francis prepares to address young people who participated in a pilgrimage hike from the Monte Mario nature reserve in Rome to St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Oct. 25, 2018, during the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



BY CHRISTOPHER WHITE

Rome — 27 October 2022

A newly released Vatican document for the next phase of Pope Francis' ongoing consultation process for the world's Catholics reckons with a number of topics once considered taboo in the Catholic Church, including women's ordination, LGBTQ relationships, children of priests, sexism and clergy sexual abuse.

The 45-page document, released on Oct. 27, distills a number of the major themes from listening sessions held with millions of Catholics across the globe over the last year. While the document is careful to note that it is not magisterial church teaching, it is arguably the most comprehensive and candid expression of the Catholic Church's relationship with the modern world yet released by a Vatican office.

The document will serve as the framework for the continental phase of the church's [ongoing synod process](#), which will involve ecclesial gatherings on every continent over the next six months, ahead of [two assemblies](#) that will be held in Rome in Oct. 2023 and Oct. 2024.

"What emerges is a profound re-appropriation of the common dignity of all the baptized," the document states in describing its efforts to listen to the voices of all Catholics. "This starts from a desire for radical inclusion — no one is excluded."

The document, titled "Enlarge the space of your tent" after the passage in Isaiah, was produced by a team of 30 advisors who [gathered](#) in Frascati, Italy for two

weeks in late-September and early October, the majority of whom were lay Catholics.

112 out of 114 episcopal conferences from around the world had submitted synthesis reports, along with all the Eastern Catholic Churches and Vatican departments, religious and lay Catholic associations and online "Digital Synod" consultations.

Listening to the margins

While stating in the document's introduction that the text is neither official church teaching nor fully conclusive, the writers note that it is theological "in the sense that it is loaded with the exquisitely theological treasure contained in the experience of listening to the voice of the Spirit enacted by the People of God, allowing its *sensus fidei* to emerge."

Notably, the document includes many voices, experiences and testimonials from those calling for change to a number of church teachings and practices.

While many of the topics raised in the document [once led](#) to formal investigations or censures from the Vatican's doctrinal office under Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, under Francis' synodal process, they are now openly discussed in a document published by one of the Vatican's major departments.

"Among those who ask for a more meaningful dialogue and a more welcoming space we also find those who, for various reasons, feel a tension between belonging to the Church and their own loving relationships, such as: remarried divorcees, single parents, people living in a polygamous marriage, LGBTQ people, etc.," the document states.

The document goes on to quote from the [report](#) from the United States, noting that "people ask that the Church be a refuge for the wounded and broken, not an institution for the perfect. They want the Church to meet people wherever they are, to walk with them rather than judge them, and to build real relationships through caring and authenticity, not a purpose of superiority."

Also highlighted is the need for the church to reach out to excluded or neglected communities, among them: the poor, the elderly, Indigenous peoples, migrants, street children, those suffering from addiction, victims of human trafficking, prisoners, victims of racial or gender violence and individuals who have left ordained ministry.

The document also notes that for the church to fully achieve its goal of synodality, which the Vatican describes as "walking together," there must be greater attention to the church's ecumenical engagement with other Christian communities.

In particular, the document highlights that in responding to social and environmental challenges, the alliances forged with other Christian confessions, religions and people of goodwill have fueled the desire for deeper collaboration, both theologically and practically.

Other pastoral matters include the desire for greater access to the Eucharist and concern about it becoming a source "for confrontation, ideology, rift or division," the need for better homilies from priests, the persecution of Christians and the global shortage of priests.

At an Oct. 27 Vatican press conference following the document's release, Luxembourg Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich was asked about its theme of enlarging the tent of the church, especially

for those that the document lists as marginalized and whose life circumstances may have put them at odds with church teaching.

The tent, he said, is open to "all the people created and loved by God."

"Let us just look to each person as a person loved by God, called into being by God. Christ died for this person on the cross, so if I am not capable of giving a space to this person in the tent, I have a problem with God," said Hollerich, who is the rector, or moderator, of the synod.

Hollerich, who participated in the press conference virtually, was joined by the head of the Vatican's synod office, Cardinal Mario Grech, and synod consultors Jesuit Fr. Giacomo Costa, Msgr. Piero Coda and theologian Anna Rowlands.

Sexism, women's ordination

The report dedicates significant attention to the role of women in church life, noting that it was a concern mentioned by every continent that submitted synod reports.

"Women remain the majority of those who attend liturgy and participate in activities, men a minority; yet most decision-making and governance roles are held by men," it states. "It is clear that the Church must find ways to attract men to a more active membership in the Church and to enable women to participate more fully at all levels of Church life."

The document goes on to quote New Zealand's episcopal conference report, which states that the "lack of equality for women within the Church is seen as a stumbling block for the Church in the modern world."

The text also quotes from a report by the two umbrella groups who represent the members of the world's Catholic religious orders, who said that "sexism in decision-making and Church language is prevalent in the Church."

"As a result, women are excluded from meaningful roles in the life of the Church, discriminated against by not receiving a fair wage for their ministries and services," they said. "Women religious are often regarded as cheap labor."

Among areas for consideration, the document includes the question of the role of women in the church's governance structures, the possibility of women preaching, the female diaconate and women's ordination to the priesthood.

On the question of ordination, the text states: "Much greater diversity of opinion was expressed on the subject of priestly ordination for women, which some reports call for, while others consider a closed issue."

The issue of the female diaconate is one that has loomed large ever since Francis launched a commission [in 2016](#) to study the historical questions surrounding women deacons, which the pope [said](#) did not reach a consensus on the early status of deacons. Francis then formed a second commission, which is ongoing, following the 2019 Synod of Bishops from the nine-nation Amazon region, where the topic had been a dominant theme.

The inclusion of the topic in the working document for the continental phase of the synod process indicates that the question is likely to once again be considered during the Rome gatherings in 2023 and 2024.

When asked about the question of women deacons during the press conference, both Grech and Rowlands told journalists that the issue was included in the document because it was mentioned by a vast number of reports submitted from around the world.

"It is there simply as a matter of fact," said Rowlands, adding that "it would have been dishonest had we not put that into the report."

Next steps

While the document offers a litany of issues for consideration, it also stresses that synodality is more than about raising particular concerns, but rather about a new process or new way or "being Church," in order to foster greater inclusion of its members.

For this to succeed, the document states, it will require changes in the structures of the Vatican's central bureaucracy (known as the Roman Curia), the *Code of Canon Law*, the church's liturgy and the formation process for priests and religious.

Similarly, the document also acknowledges that the entire process of synodality has its skeptics and that some of the church's members are fearful the process could change church teaching or reduce the church to a democratic style of governance.

For this reason, the document states, "the path to greater inclusion — the enlarged tent — is a gradual one."

As the synod process moves to the continental stage, the document asks that participants consider three questions:

- What concerns resonate most strongly with the realities of the church in your continent?;

- What are the substantial tensions or divergences that have emerged in your continent?, and;
- What priorities and themes should be shared with the rest of the world?

In terms of the next steps in the process, a final report from each continent must be submitted to the Vatican by the end of March, which will form the basis for the synod's working document, known as the *Instrumentum Laboris*, which will guide the next stage in Rome, and will be completed in June 2023.

While Pope Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops at the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, "synodality" has emerged as a key theme in Francis' pontificate.

The Vatican first [announced](#) plans for a synod on synodality in March 2020, and then in May 2021, said it was considerably widening the process to include a phased two-year listening process with consultation stages at both the diocesan and continental levels ahead of a Oct. 2023 Rome assembly of bishops from around the world.

On Oct. 16, Francis [announced](#) that he is significantly expanding that timeframe to add an additional Rome meeting in Oct. 2024, indicating that the pope wants the process — and the discussions on a number of sensitive topics, as outlined in the newly released document — to continue on much longer than formerly planned.

"Unless we become a synodal church," said Grech at the Oct. 27 press conference, "we will fail to proclaim the joy of the Gospel today."

Vatican's new synod document draws praise for its signs of listening



Philadelphia Archbishop Nelson Pérez joins college students, other young adults and ministry leaders during a synodal listening session at La Salle University April 4, 2022. (CNS/CatholicPhilly.com/Sarah Webb)



BY BRIAN FRAGA
27 October 2022

Catholic academics, theologians, clergy sex abuse survivors, and advocates for the inclusion of women and LGBTQ individuals in the U.S. Catholic Church praised the forthrightness and transparency with which the Vatican's new synod document engages controversial topics that in years past would have been off-limits for discussion.

"This is really Pope Francis enacting a post-conciliar ecclesiology. It's his contribution to making space for a listening church to really emerge," said [Natalia Imperatori-Lee](#),

chair of the religious studies department at Manhattan College.

The 45-page working [document](#) will guide the continental phase of the 2023-24 Synod of Bishops in Rome. The document distills several major themes that emerged in listening sessions with millions of Catholics across the world, who over the past year articulated a desire for a "listening" church that reaches out to the marginalized, especially the LGBTQ community, and that allows women to serve in leadership positions, including ordained ministry.

Imperatori-Lee said the Vatican's Oct. 27 release of the document, titled "Enlarge the Space of Your Tent," marks "a real Vatican II moment for the church and a real moment of reception for the council."

"You get the sense that the people who prepared this document didn't go in with an agenda, but rather worked really hard to gather up the insights and to see really where some of these contributions rhymed," Imperatori-Lee said.

In dedicating significant attention to the role of women in the Catholic Church, the synod document noted that the issue was highlighted in the synthesis reports compiled by episcopal conferences from every continent.



A woman offers her confession to a priest in front of St. Anthony Catholic Church in

Yangon, Myanmar, Nov. 28, 2017. The issue of the role of women in the church came up repeatedly in listening sessions preparing for the Synod of Bishops on synodality. (CNS/Reuters/Jorge Silva)

"It's vitally important that the document does not frame the question of women in the church as a 'Western issue,' as we see so often," Susan Reynolds, a Catholic studies professor at Emory University in Atlanta, told NCR. "The document roots the discussion of women in 'our common baptismal dignity,' centering reports from the Holy Land, Korea, New Zealand and beyond."

Catholics across the globe said they want women to have more leadership roles at all levels in the church, including ordained ministry. The document also acknowledges "a great diversity of opinion," in which some synod participants believe ordaining women is a matter of justice while others consider the issue to be a settled matter of Catholic teaching.

Still, the fact that an official Vatican document acknowledged the women's ordination debate and the widespread differences of opinion among Catholics on the matter encouraged Kate McElwee, executive director of the Women's Ordination Conference, a Washington D.C.-based organization that advocates for women to be ordained deacons, priests and bishops in the Catholic Church.

"It really does feel like a landmark moment for the church," McElwee said. "It feels like today the church shows it has the capacity to listen to its people, which in its own way is a bit revolutionary."

"Despite a lot of skepticism and reluctance to engage in synodality in the United States and throughout the world, the clear call for

women's inclusion broke through, and to me that's very encouraging," McElwee added.

On the issue of clergy sex abuse, a scandal that continues to vex the universal church more than 20 years after The Boston Globe exposed the scope of the crisis in the Boston Archdiocese, the document acknowledges the lack of trust and credibility resulting from those crimes and institutional cover-ups.

"While many in the Church talk about the abuse crisis as a problem of the past, the document calls this reality an 'open wound that continues to inflict pain' on victims, their loved ones and the entire community," said Sara Larson, executive director of Awake Milwaukee, a lay-led advocacy group that supports survivors of clergy sex abuse.

Larson told NCR in an email that the document's language on the clergy sex abuse crisis "certainly reflects the experience of Awake and the contribution we submitted from our own synodal conversations with abuse survivors and others who care about this issue."

The document also acknowledges that Catholics across the world want the church to foster "a more meaningful dialogue" and a welcoming space for those whose intimate relationships are at tension with official church doctrine, including LGBTQ people.

That the document uses "LGBTQ" — and "LGBTQIA" in one instance — instead of citing terms such as "same-sex attracted" or conflating it with "gender ideology" was itself a cause for celebration among groups like New Ways Ministry, a Maryland-based organization that advocates for LGBTQ Catholics.

" 'LGBTQ' now seems here to stay, and it is a sign of respect from the Vatican," New Ways Ministry said Oct. 27 in a prepared statement.

[Marianne Duddy-Burke](#), executive director of DignityUSA, a Massachusetts-based organization that also advocates for LGBTQ Catholics, told NCR that the document's tone indicated to her that church leaders have been listening to the concerns and experiences that LGBTQ Catholics and their relatives shared in their listening sessions.

"The acknowledgement that LGBTQI and their families often do not feel at home in the church, that we and others whose loving relationships have been dismissed by the church have experienced a lot of pain, that we have a credible claim on church membership and full inclusion, that was really refreshing to hear," Duddy-Burke said.

The document elicited negative comments from some conservative Catholics who have criticized the synodal process. Raymond Arroyo — the EWTN anchor on whose show Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on Oct. 6 likened the synod to "a hostile takeover" of the church — on Oct. 27 [tweeted](#) about the "scant participation in these local surveys" to downplay the synod's significance.

Stephen White, executive director of the Catholic Project at the Catholic University of America, offered a nuanced critique of the process. He told NCR in an email that synodality helps all the baptized realize their responsibility for the church's mission, as he sees synodality to be "Lumen Gentium in action," referring to the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

"That said, the focus of the synod thus far, and of the document in particular, has been largely horizontal and subjective: How do we get the most people to feel listened to and welcome? These are important dimensions in the life of the church, no doubt. But they don't get to the heart of the church's mission," White said.

[Massimo Faggioli](#), a moral theologian and church historian at Villanova University, told NCR that his major criticism of the process is that the timeline for the synod's continental phase is "extremely short," adding that bishops the world over will need to complete that work by the end of March 2023.

"I don't know how realistic it will be to have all these discussions in five months. I believe that will be a big challenge," said Faggioli, who described the Vatican's new document as important because it is a "faithful picture" of what the synod's participants have actually been saying.

"It will be more difficult to ignore all that, or to keep the status quo," Faggioli said. "This is why some bishops and some cardinals are worried or afraid, because they know that after this, it will be hard to say that something like the issue of women in the church is the concern of a small minority. It is obviously a global issue now, with very different sensibilities yes, but it is no longer a North American or European thing."