(Photo: Pope Francis delivering his final remarks during the Youth Synod's closing session on Saturday, Oct. 27, 2018.)

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"See therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly: not as unwise, but as wise: redeeming the time, because the days are evil." – Ephesians 5:15-16

Last month (Oct. 4-15), I had the honor of traveling to Rome with members of the Fatima Center to cover the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment (Oct. 3-28). As my dearly departed predecessor, John Vennari (*requiescat in pace*), and Christopher Ferrara did in 2015, I went to the Eternal City not only to report on daily synod news, but more importantly to place what I saw and heard within the broader context of the Church's ongoing crisis – one that began long before Pope Francis but has accelerated at break-neck speed during his disastrous pontificate.

This spiritual context is essential for those who wish to go beyond the bare facts and understand their grave significance, especially as they concern the war being waged by "principalities and power…the rulers of the world of this darkness…the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Eph. 6:12) against the relatively few who still "hold the Catholic Faith whole and undefiled" (Athanasian Creed). With that in mind and heart, my colleagues and I did our best to make the most of our time, for indeed, as St. Paul says, "the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16).

Expectations and First Impressions

I was aware beforehand that the youth synod would most likely replicate the 2014 and 2015 family synods, as far as manipulation is concerned. Last March, for example, I provided a brief history of the "Amoris-Dubia Drama," as I call it, in the first installment of my "Fatima Centennial: Know the Signs of the Times" series, recalling how there was a clear agenda in 2014 and 2015 to reach a pre-determined outcome – namely, the so-called "Kasper Proposal" of admission to the sacraments for divorced and "remarried" Catholics – which has since been accomplished vis-à-vis *Amoris Laetitia*.

Christopher Ferrara also wrote an excellent two-part series for CFN earlier this year regarding the youth synod ("Phony Synod III", published in the July and August issues), so I

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was prepared and even expecting to encounter the same sort of manipulation at work during the previous synods – only this time, so it seemed, for the purpose of "normalizing" homosexuality in the Church.

One of the primary reasons for this suspicion is found towards the end of the youth synod's mammoth *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL) or working document:

> "Some ***LGBT youths***, through various contributions that were received by the General Secretariat of the Synod, wish to 'benefit from greater closeness' and experience greater care by the Church, while some BC [bishops' conferences] ask themselves what to suggest 'to ***young people who decide to create homosexual instead of heterosexual couples*** and, above all, would like to be close to the Church.'" (IL, n. 197, emphasis added)

On the day of my arrival in Rome (Oct. 4), Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia presented an intervention (brief address) in the synod hall challenging the use of "LGBT" in any Church document:

> "There is no such thing as an 'LGBTQ Catholic' or a 'transgender Catholic' or a 'heterosexual Catholic,' as if our sexual appetites defined who we are; as if these designations described discrete communities of differing but equal integrity within the real ecclesial community, the Body of Jesus Christ. This has *never* been true in the life of the Church, and is not true now. It follows that *'LGBTQ' and similar language should not be used in Church documents,* because using it suggests that these are real, autonomous groups, and the Church simply doesn't categorize people that way."

Earlier that same week (Oct. 1), *LifeSiteNews* Rome correspondent Diane Montagna pointed out to Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri (General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops and manipulator-in-chief of the two family synods) after a press briefing that "LGBT" did not appear in the final document from the Pre-Synodal Meeting (Mar. 19-24), contrary to Baldisseri's prior claim that the IL simply quoted the pre-synodal document on the matter. She went on to ask if the controversial acronym might be removed from the working document as a means of preventing its inclusion in the final text. His response? "Look, I am not removing anything. The Synod Fathers will discuss it article by article. All the texts, even the loftiest in the world, will be discussed."

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Cardinal Lorenzo Baldiserri , Secretary General of the Synod of Bishop (Sept. 2013-Present)

Thus, despite these praiseworthy acts of resistance, "LGBT" remained and the agenda pressed forward. Interestingly, however, now that the synod is over and the contents of the final document (produced only in Italian) are beginning to emerge as we go to press, the dominant theme appears to be "synodality" (more on this later on).

Need for Beauty, Order, and Permanence

Although much of my time and energy was spent keeping tabs on the sinister agenda at work, my days in the Eternal City were not without their positive moments. I had never before been to Rome, so unlike my Fatima Center colleagues and most other reporters on the scene, it was my first time encountering St. Peter's Basilica in person and the experience had a profound impact. I believe it was a special moment of grace by which Our Lord prepared me for the work ahead.

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Upon entering the square and gazing at the most iconic church in Christendom, I found myself captivated by the *beauty*, *order*, and *permanence* of Holy Mother Church, which the glorious basilica, built over the tomb of St. Peter himself, embodies so well. *No matter how corrupt the human element of the Church becomes*, I thought, *Our Lord will never allow the beauty, order, and permanence of His Mystical Body to be completely destroyed*. In short, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

At the same time, I was struck by how much young people, in particular, desperately need *beauty*, *order*, and *permanence* in their lives, especially at this time in history when so many of them are immersed in *ugliness*, *chaos*, and *instability*. While some among them may say they *want* "freedom" (license) and "compassion" (indifference to sin) from their elders, what they really *need* is sound catechesis and a holy example, first from their own parents (who

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are nowhere identified in the IL as the primary educators), and then from the Church's hierarchy.

The IL includes a section on "Nourishing Faith through Catechesis" (nn. 190-193), but not surprisingly it fails to emphasize the importance of teaching the basic truths of the Faith (e.g. creation, Original Sin and its consequences, our need for salvation, the Person and mission of Our Lord, *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*). Instead, it says, "Catechesis does not always enjoy a good reputation among young people, because it reminds many of them of 'a compulsory and unchosen path in their childhood'" (n. 190), while claiming that "successful experiences of catechesis" are based on "experiential journeys of living encounter with Christ" (n. 192). Seriously, what does that even mean?

During one of my video reports, I quoted from an excellent critique of the working document that brilliantly articulates its deep flaws. Among other valuable insights, the critique explains:

> "***There is much discussion about what young people want; little about how these wants must be transformed by grace in a life that conforms to God's will for their lives.*** After pages of analysis of their material conditions, the IL offers no guidance on how these material concerns might be elevated and oriented toward their supernatural end. Though the IL does offer some criticism of exclusively materialistic/utilitarian goals (§147), the majority of the document painstakingly catalogues the varied socio-economic and cultural realities of young adults while offering no meaningful reflection on spiritual, existential, or moral concerns. The reader may easily conclude that the latter are of no importance to the Church." (Emphasis added)

And further:

> "***It is common knowledge that adolescents from permissive households typically yearn for parents to care enough to set limits and give direction, even if they rebel against this direction.*** Similarly, the Church as mother and teacher cannot through negligence or cowardice forfeit this necessary role of setting limits and directing (Cf. §178). In this regard §171, which points to the motherhood of the Church, does not go far enough. It offers only a listening and accompanying role while eliminating that of teaching." (Emphasis added)

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Simply put, there are far too many "permissive parents" among the Church's hierarchy and not nearly enough true fathers whose primary concern is the salvation and sanctification of souls.

Thankfully, there are some young people who *do* want to receive sound doctrine and a radical call to holiness from the Church. Take, for example, the international group of Catholic youth who drafted an alternative document following the Pre-Synodal Meeting this past spring because their calls for orthodox catechesis, reverent liturgy (including the Traditional Latin Mass), and bold public witness were summarily ignored. And more recently, during the synod itself, a group of over 200 college students and young professionals from Australia submitted an open letter to the Synod Fathers in which they state, "Without the Church and everything she offers – divine revelation, tradition, community, and reason itself – conscience has no substance. We need a reliable moral compass. For this, the young need to be well-formed in the truth."

The problem is that the men in control of the synod do not share this desire for truth. They are much more interested in perpetuating the "profane novelties" (1 Tim. 6:20) of the Second Vatican Council, in opposition to "the appeal of traditionalist or fundamentalist proposals" (IL, n. 63), as we shall see.

Modernist Control of the Synod

Being a Vatican-accredited journalist during my time in Rome allowed me to witness firsthand the obvious manipulation of the synod and the Church, in general, by the Modernists who occupy key positions in the hierarchy. As one writer summed it up back in July, "October's youth synod is about finishing the old business of the St. Gallen mafia," the Modernist cadre who managed to get Jorge Mario Bergoglio elected to the Chair of Peter in 2013 after a narrow defeat in 2005. (The former leader of this group was Cardinal Carlo Martini, d. 2012, a strong proponent of "synodality.")

The synod press briefings are a prime example. After attending several of them, I noticed a clear pattern emerge: the majority of the prelates who sat on the daily panel were either **(a)** "Members of Pontifical Nomination" – that is, appointed directly by Pope Francis to the youth synod (papal delegate), rather than having been elected by their respective episcopal conferences – or **(b)** *ex officio* delegates – those who were automatically appointed due to their position within the overall framework of the Synod of Bishops[1] (the one exception being my first "presser" on Oct. 5, at which both bishops happened to be elected delegates):

Friday, Oct. 5

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- **Archbishop Anthony Fisher, OP** of Sydney, Australia (elected delegate; fielded my question about the Traditional Latin Mass)

- **Bishop Manuel Ochogavía Barahona, OSA** of Colón-Kuna Yala, Panama (elected delegate; helping to organize World Youth Day 2019 in Panama; supporter of the newly "canonized" Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was notoriously associated with liberation theology)



From left: Ms. Tahiry Malala Marion Sophie Rakotoroalahy (auditor from Madagascar), Archbishop Anthony Fisher, OP, and Bishop Manuel Ochogavía Barahona, OSA.

Saturday, Oct. 6

- **Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, CSSp**, Archbishop of Bangui, Central African Republic (papal delegate)

- **Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi**, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education (*ex*

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officio delegate as president of the Synod of Bishops' Commission for Disputes, appointed as such by Francis; head of the dicastery that produced *Veritatis Gaudium*, a lengthy apostolic constitution "On Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties" released late last year that repeatedly proposes Vatican II as the "norm" to follow)



From left: Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, CSSp, Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, and Dr. Paolo Ruffini (Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication).

Monday, Oct. 8

- **Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna** of Malta (*ex officio* delegate as a member of the Synod of Bishops' Commission for Disputes, appointed as such by Francis; head of the Maltese episcopal conference, which issued controversial guidelines on *Amoris Laetitia* that were praised by Pope Francis)

- **Bishop Emmanuel Gobilliard** of Lyon (auxiliary), France (elected delegate)

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From left: Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna, Bishop Emmanuel Gobilliard, and Dr. Paolo Ruffini.

Tuesday, Oct. 9

- **Cardinal Desiré Tsarahazana**, Archbishop of Toamasina, Madagascar (papal delegate)

- **Cardinal Gérald LaCroix, ISPX**, Archbishop of Québec, Canada (papal delegate)

- **Cardinal Oswald Gracias**, Archbishop of Bombay, India (*ex officio* delegate as a member of the Synod of Bishops' Ordinary Council; member of the Pope's famous "C9" or Council of Cardinals, all of whom pledged full support for Francis in the wake of Archbishop Viganò's testimony)

Wednesday, Oct. 10

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- **Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes**, Archbishop of Mexico City (papal delegate; stated during the briefing that the Church "needs to adapt itself to comply with its mission" and "Pope Francis in 2015…told us that Vatican II already signaled the pathway")

- **Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ** of Luxembourg (papal delegate; expressed concern during the briefing about political "populism," including a quip surely intended for President Trump)



From left: Briana Regina Santiago (auditor from the United States), Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes, and Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ.

Thursday, Oct. 11

- **Archbishop Bruno Forte** of Chieti-Vasto, Italy (*ex officio* delegate as a member of the Synod of Bishops' Ordinary Council; author of a portion of the 2014 Extraordinary Synod's outrageous mid-term report which praised "positive" elements of cohabitation and homosexuality)

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- **Bishop Lazzaro You Heung-Sik** of Daejeon, South Korea (papal delegate)


From left: Archbishop Bruno Forte, Bishop Lazzaro You Heung-Sik, and Dr. Paolo Ruffini.

Notice that of the 13 prelates listed above, only *three* of them (Fisher, Ochogavía Barahona, and Gobilliard) were elected by their respective episcopal conferences. The other ten were appointed in some manner by Pope Francis, whether directly or by virtue of their synodal position held at his discretion.

Needless to say, after noting this "coincidence" and also being excluded by the Holy See Press Office Director from asking further questions,[2] it became evident that the press briefings were largely a sham, a means of controlling the narrative and pushing the Modernist agenda.

Stacking the Drafting Commission

This clear trend of "stacking the deck" was likewise evident in the list of prelates responsible for drafting the final synod document, several of whom are notorious for

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heterodoxy. On Oct. 10, the Vatican announced the 12 individuals who would serve on the drafting commission, as Edward Pentin of the *National Catholic Register* reported:

> "They comprise **Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes**, the archbishop of Mexico City and one of 41 delegates personally chosen by the Pope to attend the synod; **Archbishop Peter Comensoli** of Melbourne, Australia, also a papal delegate; Ghanaian **Cardinal Peter Turkson**, the prefect of the Vatican dicastery for Integral Human Development; **Cardinal Oswald Gracias**, the archbishop of Mumbai, India, and a member of the Pope's 'C9' Council of Cardinals advising Francis on Church reform; and **Archbishop Bruno Forte** of Chieti, Italy, a member of the synod's organizing council.
>
> **Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri**, the secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, and Cardinal Sérgio da Rocha of Brasilia, Brazil, the general relator of the synod, automatically have places on the commission.
>
> The Pope has personally chosen three others to help draft the final document: Brazilian Father Alexandre Awi Mello, the secretary for the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life; Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the major archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church; and Father Eduardo Gonzalo Redondo, the director of vocations ministry in Cuba.
>
> Two other priests have been chosen who have so far helped with preparations for the synod and will serve as special secretaries on the commission: Brazilian Jesuit **Father Giacomo Costa, one of the main authors of the *instrumentum laboris***, the director of the magazine *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, and the **vice president of the "Carlo Maria Martini Foundation;"** and Father Rossano Sala, the professor of youth pastoral outreach at the Pontifical Salesian University and director of the Italian magazine *Note di Pastorale Giovanile*."

Diane Montagna summarized the problem with this group as follows:

> "**The fact that the twelve-member drafting commission is heavily stacked with papally appointed members and synod organizers is raising concerns that the synod may be used as a vehicle to introduce pastoral programs rooted in questionable teaching.** …

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> The release of the names of the drafting commission has increased concerns that the Youth Synod may be used as a vehicle for introducing a general acceptance of a homosexual lifestyle within the Church."

"Canonizing" the Council

I should also mention the obvious attempt to "canonize" the Modernist sacred cow (Vatican II) halfway through the synod. I am referring, of course, to the "canonization" of Pope Paul VI on Sunday, Oct. 14, the primary protagonist of the Council – the man who brought it to completion, issued the documents, implemented the "reforms", created the modern system of synods being exploited by Pope Francis, and ultimately presided over what he himself called an "auto-demolition" (in Italian, *autodemolizione*) of the Church.

A surprisingly sober assessment of this attempt was published two days prior by *First Things* magazine, from which I quoted during my final video report:

> "On October 14, 2018, Pope Francis will canonize Pope Paul VI as the 82nd saint among the 266 popes. Paul VI will become only the eighth papal saint since 1000 AD, but the fourth of the twentieth century, joining Pius X, John XXIII, and John Paul II. What are we to make of this fact? …
>
> … Though John Paul II was likely to be canonized quickly in any case due to his massive popularity, John XXIII's and Paul VI's causes gained momentum only after Francis's election. Francis confirmed the importance of Vatican II to the canonizations of John XXIII and John Paul II at the canonization Mass for both popes. Moreover, as the causes of post-Vatican II popes are expedited, the causes of recent pre-Vatican II popes have stalled. Francis has moved to canonize not simply John, Paul, and John Paul, but the Vatican II era itself.
>
> One might expect this canonized period (1958-2005, from the election of John XXIII to the death of John Paul II) to have been a time of resounding success for the Church. The last period during which popes were canonized with such frequency—the first five hundred years of the Church's existence—saw the Church grow in numbers and in faith. But in fact the Catholic Church is in serious decline and at its most unstable moment since the Reformation."

The article goes on to cite evidence of "serious decline" in the form of drastic decreases in

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Mass attendance and vocations to the priesthood and religious life, also noting, “Rates of clerical sexual abuse of children were at their highest in the three decades following Vatican II.”

Yet Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, spun a very different yarn. He stated during an Oct. 11 press conference:

> “Paul VI will be canonized on 14 October by our Pope Francis. He was the Pope of Vatican Council II. While John XXIII had the prophetic courage to open the great ecumenical assembly, Paul VI had the mission to guide it, to conclude it and to make it enter the life of the Church and of the world.”

Cardinal Beccui proceeded to list some of Paul VI’s “courageous initiatives”: “liturgical reform, the internationalization of the Roman Curia with the establishment of new Dicasteries, [and] the establishment of the Synod of Bishops,” while eventually gushing:

> “The heart of Paul VI overflowed in the expression of the purest spirituality of the Council: an ‘inner reform’ of the Church, guided towards holiness, which unites prayer and dogma, charity and truth, and which animates the People of God in the diversity of vocations, in ecumenical dialogue, in true openness to the world to better communicate the light of Christ.”

There is only one word to describe this drivel: *propaganda*. And Francis himself added more of the same during his “canonization” homily:

> “Even in the midst of tiredness and misunderstanding, Paul VI bore witness in a passionate way to the beauty and the joy of following Christ totally. Today he still urges us, together with the Council whose wise helmsman he was, to live our common vocation: the universal call to holiness. Not to half measures, but to holiness.”

What is the end game of this propaganda? To make us believe – and the youth, in particular – that there was no “authentic” Church or holiness prior to Vatican II. Take, for example, the following passage from the synod’s IL:

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> "**The Second Vatican Council clearly recovered mankind's vocational horizon** when it used such terms to express both how all human beings are destined for communion with Christ (cf. LG 3.13; GS 19.32), and the universal call to holiness (cf. LG 39-42), locating individual vocations within this interpretative horizon: vocations to the ordained ministry and consecrated life, as well as lay vocations (cf. LG 31), especially in their spousal form (cf. LG 35; GS 48.49.52). **Subsequent magisterial teaching developed along the same lines**, recognizing the analogical character of the term "vocation" and the many dimensions that characterize the reality it designates with respect to each personal mission, and to the communion of all people." (n. 87)

In short, Pope Francis and his Modernist allies, following the course set by their predecessors vis-à-vis the Council, are attempting to *totally eradicate Tradition* and *fundamentally transform the Church* into something she is not, namely, a "synodal Church" of perpetual revolution.

The Final Document Says It All

And this brings us back to the synod itself and the final document it produced. Preliminary reports from those who have read the Italian text (official translations are not yet available) indicate that "synodality" made a surprise and prominent appearance. Writes Edward Pentin:

> "Despite considerable opposition by some synod fathers in the final days of the synod, all the paragraphs on synodality passed with a two-thirds majority – but they also attracted the most votes against. Many synod fathers were uneasy with the inclusion of the term as it had hardly figured in the synod debates, was inserted into the document at the very end of the assembly, wasn't in the working document, and, in their judgment, deserves a synod of its own given its importance. Some were apprehensive about such an emphasis on the subject (it dominates Part III of the final document) as they saw it as a means of decentralizing and democratizing the Church and the magisterium away from the papacy and the Vatican to local churches."

Again, the final document was produced *only in Italian*. No written translations were provided to non-Italian speakers, only verbal translations given "on the fly" while the text was being read aloud and voted on, which led Archbishop Chaput to comment:

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> "Many of the bishops were frustrated by the lack of advance translations for important issues they were expected to vote on. As one of the synod fathers argued, it's actually immoral to vote 'yes' on significant issues if you can't even read and reflect on what the text says. A lot of delegates were also surprised and unhappy with the introduction of synodality as a topic in a gathering themed to young people. It isn't a natural fit. Synodality has serious implications. It deserves serious theological reflection and discussion among the bishops. That didn't happen…"

Why the sudden push for "synodality"? Diane Montagna explains:

> "Pope Francis has long advocated a synodal Church. In an address marking the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, instituted by Pope Paul VI, the Pope said the 'journey of synodality is the journey that God wants from His Church in the third millennium.' …
>
> Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini [former leader of the St. Gallen Mafia] was among the first to propose the model of a 'synodal' Church, in which the Pope no longer rules as an absolute monarch, but is part of 'a sort of permanent council of regents.'"

Montagna goes on to quote from Pope Francis' final remarks at the synod's closing session (Oct. 27), during which he said, "Now the Holy Spirit gives us the document so that it can work in our hearts." Translation: the final document, which must be read in continuity with the *Instrumentum Laboris* (and no doubt another pre-written "post-synodal apostolic exhortation"), is inspired by God and therefore must be followed.

From start to finish, it was truly another rigged synod. And apart from divine intervention, the madness is far from over.

Only Our Lady Can Help Us

My experiences in Rome have confirmed all the more the importance of Our Lady of Fatima's words to the three little shepherds: "…continue reciting the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary… because only She can help you" (July 13, 1917).

I encourage readers to view all of my Synod 2018 reports and "be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power," that together we may continue our spiritual combat against

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"the deceits of the devil" (Eph. 6:10, 11) within the Church. *Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!*

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Notes

[1] For details on the structure and governing procedures of the Synod of Bishops, see *Ordo Synodi Episcoporum*.

[2] I attempted as much during the press briefings on Oct. 10 and 11 but was not allowed by Dr. Greg Burke, who moderated the Q&A sessions. After inquiring about whether the Traditional Latin Mass (Oct. 5) and devotion to Our Lady (Oct. 6) were being discussed by the Synod Fathers, perhaps I was blacklisted.

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