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October 7, 2015

As we watch the Synod, amid much controversy of the Church's stance on the divorced and remarried receiving the Eucharist, the attitude toward homosexuality, and whether to make room for the advancement of the role of women in the Church, there are numerous signs of hope for Church Reform.

What can you do while the Synod is in session?

[Sign this petition](#) joining with other international reform organizations who have sent an [Appeal](#) outlining the fundamental problems experienced by Catholic families throughout the world:

- The social and economic problems of the family should be widely discussed by the Synod, particularly those affecting the most vulnerable, children and women.
- Regarding the divorced and remarried and their admission to the Eucharist, the practice of the early Church should be adopted, as it is done in the Orthodox Church.
- Concerning the Motu Proprio (Apostolic letter) of Pope Francis on the canonical process of nullity of marriage we agree with and welcome the simplification of the procedure, but question the concept of annulment as such.
- Homosexual individuals and same-sex couples should be considered as full members of the Church with every right and every duty.
- '*Humanae Vitae*' has not been accepted by the majority of the People of God; couples following their conscience must be respected.
- The Synod should send a clear and public message of repentance to the survivors of clerical sex abuse and their families.
- However much we hope for solutions to these many problems from the presently constituted Synod, we assert that a major flaw of the synod is its clericalized nature and especially the non-representation of the many Catholic family forms we experience in our contemporary world.

Pope Francis asks the bishops to remain open to movement of Spirit

In his opening remarks, Pope Francis asks the Bishops to remain open minded as he reminds them that the Synod is a place where "the Spirit speaks by means of every person's tongue, who lets himself be guided by the God who always surprises, the God who reveals himself to little ones, who hides from the knowing and intelligent; the God who created the law and the Sabbath for man and not vice versa; by the God, who leaves the 99 sheep to look for the one lost sheep; the God who is always greater than our logic and our calculations."



Day One

Monday, October 5

In his 7,000-word opening address on Monday morning, intended to set the tone for the synod's work, Cardinal Erdő seemed determined to close a series of doors beginning with the controversial proposal of German Cardinal Walter Kasper to allow divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to return to Communion. Erdő gave all the traditional arguments: To admit remarried divorcees to Communion without repentance would oppose the Church's "fidelity to the indissolubility of marriage." He indicated that the only case in which divorced and

remarried believers could be readmitted to Communion is if they "practice continence through the strength of grace," meaning they renounce any sexual relationship, and only then if allowing them to take Communion doesn't "provoke scandal."

Erdő left no key issue uncovered. Upholding the Church's traditional position on homosexuality being a disordered state, he said: "There is no basis for comparing or making analogies, even remotely, between homosexual unions and God's plan for matrimony and the family," On another front, Erdő issued a ringing defense of the late Pope Paul VI's controversial 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which reaffirmed the Church's traditional opposition to birth control. Erdő's speech also included clear denunciations of both abortion, insisting on the "inviolable character of human life," and euthanasia, insisting on "right of natural death."

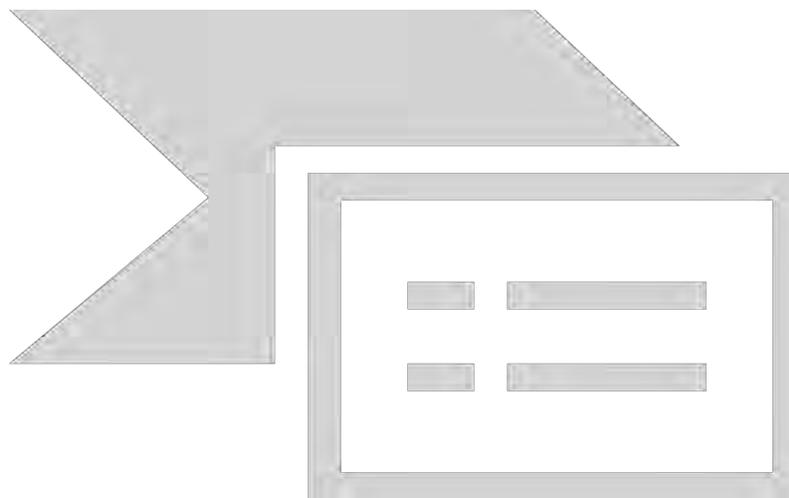
At one point, responding to the blow back of unhappiness over each speech being limited to 3 minutes, Francis felt compelled to take the microphone to insist that he'd personally approved the new rules, which critics feel are designed to limit the information flow and stack the deck in favor of desired outcomes. [Summary of John Allen's report in [Crux](#)]

Day Two

Tuesday, October 6

If the biggest news out of day one at the Synod on Monday was the call to uphold Catholic teaching in the opening report by leading Synod organizer, Cardinal Peter Erdő, the biggest news of day two may be the evident push-back against him.

While Erdő strongly opposed Kasper's Communion proposal, among other favored causes of the liberal faction, both of the Synod fathers at Tuesday's Vatican press briefing - Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli and Canadian Archbishop Paul-Andre Durocher - indicated in one way or another that allowing Communion for Catholics who have divorced and civilly remarried is an "open question." Archbishop Celli told reporters: "We can't say everything was closed by the report of yesterday morning."



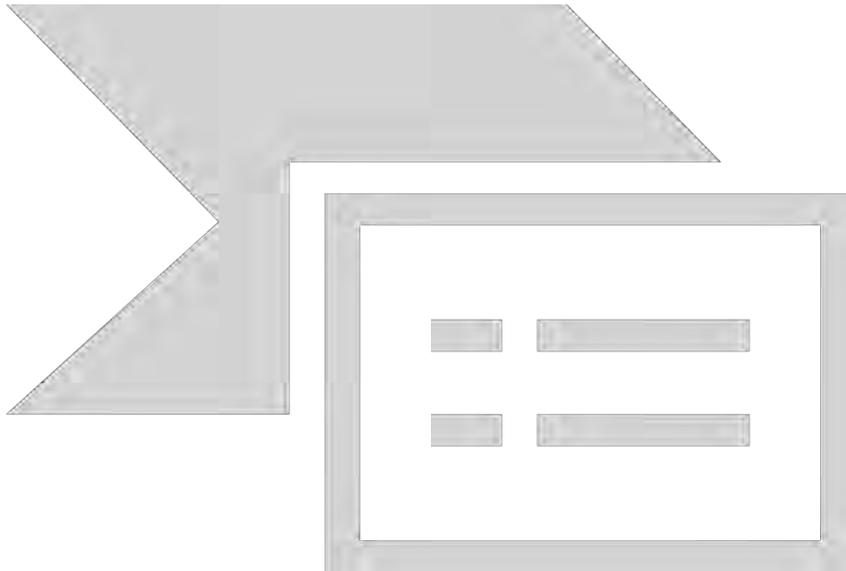
The issue of **homosexuality** was also raised on day two and was actually raised first by Pope Francis himself when he declared early in his papacy, "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" Note that the Holy Father deliberately using the English word, "gay."

"According to summary given by Vatican English-language

spokesman Father Thomas Rosica (second from left), some Synod fathers are continuing to advance radical proposals in contradiction of Catholic tradition and practice, in particular: a change in

language regarding sinful situations, a wide use of general absolution for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the allowance of regional solutions to the question of Communion for the divorced and remarried.

Homosexuality was the main example Father Rosica used in discussing the language issue. "There must be an end to exclusionary language and a strong emphasis on embracing reality as it is. We should not be afraid of new and complex situations." On **general absolution**, Father Rosica said there was a proposal to "consider, perhaps for the Jubilee of Mercy, reopening or reinstating form three of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which involves general absolution. This would be a strong indication and a very clear signal to people who are on the fringes to come forward." On the question of the **divorced and remarried**, he said, "what is needed is not necessarily a universal solution to complex problems. But discussions in small groups and discussions in regional, national, and continental groupings to talk about the solutions to the different areas, the different problems which are not necessarily the same throughout the world." The push for **regional solutions** to controversial issues has been a prominent cause for the Synod's liberal faction, in particular from the German fathers. Cardinal Reinhard Marx famously declared that the Catholic Church in Germany was not a "subsidiary of Rome" and would adopt its own approach on family issues. Rosica's report focused on the proposals for change, with no mention of any defense of Catholic teaching and practice, but it is unclear how prominent these proposals actually were in the Synod hall.



Perhaps the most dramatic proposal came from Archbishop Paul-Andre Durocher from Quebec, Canada as he suggested that it was time for the Church to seriously consider the ordination of women to the diaconate. The working document, which is guiding the first three weeks of the synod's discussions, proposed **giving women greater responsibility in the church**, particularly through involving them in

"the decision-making process; their participation in the governing of some institutions; and their involvement in the formation of ordained ministers. In addition to the possibility of **allowing for women deacons**, he said he also proposed that women be hired for "decision-making jobs" that could be opened to women in the Roman Curia, diocesan chanceries and large-scale church initiatives and events. Another thing, he said, "would be to look at the possibility of allowing married couples - men and women, who have been properly trained and accompanied - to speak during Sunday homilies so that they can testify, give witness to the relationship between God's word and their own marriage life and their own life as families."

At Tuesday's press conference at the end of the day, Archbishop Durocher argued that there are two dominant temptations at the Synod. "One reaction is to emphasize what the teaching is, out of fear that as the culture moves away from that vision, our own understanding is diluted. The other fear is that we lose contact with our culture and that we close in on ourselves," he said. The reason why prelates such as Cardinal Erdo, Cardinal Burke, and others are so strenuously promoting the Church's doctrine at this time is not out of a fear or avoidance of dialoguing with the world. It is because they feel that those advocating "dialogue" are in fact undermining the Church's doctrine. The conservative's view is that our world is increasingly in crisis and its only hope is for the Church to find ways of reaching it with the Gospel. They are afraid that the Synod will be hijacked by prelates who want to conform the Church to the world, rather than bring the world into the Church, and so it has unnecessarily devolved into a battle over the Church's very being.[Summary of article from [LifeSiteNews](#)]

Day Three

Society and the church have much to learn from the family and, in fact, the bond between the church and the family is "indissoluble," Pope Francis said. Families bring needed values and a humanizing spirit to society and, when they mirror God's love for all, they teach the church how it should relate to all people, including the "imperfect," the pope said. While members of the Synod of Bishops on the family were meeting in small groups, Pope Francis held his audience with an estimated 30,000 people in St. Peter's Square. He asked them to accompany the synod with their prayers. [[Read more at NCR](#)]

What else can you do while the Synod is in session?

We invite you to participate in our blog called *The People Speak Out*, which will continue through the Jubilee Year and be delivered to Pope Francis and the Bishops. Here you have the opportunity to share your own very personal story of how the Church teachings being discussed at the Synod have shaped your life . . . for better or for worse.

Our blog issues include a variety of topics. If you are divorced and remarried, do you feel cut off from the Sacraments? If you are gay or lesbian, do you feel disenfranchised by the Church? If you are a woman, how have you been treated? Has the Church's teaching restricting artificial contraception had an impact on your life and marriage? If you are living with someone outside of marriage, do you feel welcomed to the Sacraments? If you were a priest and left because you fell in love, how has the obligation for celibacy impacted your life? If you left the Church, share the circumstance that led to your leaving and what, if anything, would it take to bring you back? We ask you to share your very personal story on any of these issues.

Click on the link below now. Pope Francis wants to hear your story and to have the Bishops hear them.

www.SynodBishopsCanYouHearUs.org



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