

## Grand Synthesis: The Youth Synod and the Future of the Church

Two months ago, the Editorial Committee chose these topics as the related theme for this issue of Corpus. Since that time, the Church has imploded after the release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report and the revelations about Cardinal McCarrick's long-term abuse of seminarians.

In that context, to host a Synod in Rome featuring 260 bishops and another 150 youth and members of religious orders is, indeed, most ambitious.

**"If the Church cannot attract and keep young people, it will have no future."**

**Tom Reese in America: Oct. 2, 2018**

Reese is spot on. The Church's future is intrinsically linked with today's youth, the 20 and 30 some things that may or may not join the group.

Each of the articles in this issue (except for Corpus related ones) focus on the Church's future. Jan Larson's pivotal piece on "the Church 50 years from now" documents what is likely to occur: continuing diminishment of parishes, budgets, members, vocations; obvious administrative dysfunction; necessity of allowing ordination for married men and all women; reformulating doctrines on the Trinity, original sin, Eucharist.

The book review on Archbishop Hunthausen showcases the qualities and beliefs of an outstanding Vatican II leader – while, also, revealing the worst of the Vatican's effort to investigate and humiliate such a lovely man.

Pope Francis' book on "A Future of Faith" highlights his relentless emphasis on **the need for dialogue** and its critical role in building bridges. He also stresses that we maintain both unity and diversity among all nations and cultures. He decries the rigidity of younger priests, finding their guidance in canon law rather than the Gospel, and over-focusing on 'below the waist' morality. Francis has many dreams and hopes, especially for immigrants and refugees, the poor and the dispossessed. His vision and his optimism are broad and deeply

Journalists have complained about the optics of the Synod – the red/green matching robes worn by the clerics, the fact that only 10% of attendees are women (with none of them allowed to vote); the exclusion of LGBT members, etc. Many bishops apologized for the on-going sexual abuse crisis. Others stated that "young people need to be heard, not arrogantly lectured to"; but the style of the meetings didn't foster this. John Allen said "This is Francis' Synod: his people, his rules, his approach – adopted shortly before the meeting."

For myself, the most ominous articles from the Synod discussed the possibility of a schism (a word that is difficult to pronounce much less imagine.) Iliia Delio has an article in *Omega Center* called "Schism or Evolution" and Massimo Foggioni's piece is in *Commonweal*: "Flirting With Schism." Both of them suggest that the split would occur between those embracing ordination for women, married men, gays who are public, and LGBT members -- versus those who oppose these types of long-held progressive developments.

**"You stay in the church, despite its sins, because you long for what it proposes about the nature and destiny of human life to be true." Paul Baumann in *Commonweal*: Sept. 23, 2018**

It does appear that, 50 Years after Vatican II and 500 years after the Reformation -- the Church is, again, at a critical crossroad. The anger behind the pent up demands for transparency and expansive changes in governance will not disappear after one – or ten – Vatican gatherings. It is action, not words, that must inevitably occur. Action that upends the centuries old control of power by elderly, mostly white, celibate males.

We live in extraordinary times, in the church and in the country. May God continue to be with us all, day by week, month by year.

By Jim Ewens