



## Cardinal Grech champions Synod on Synodality as the ‘mature fruit’ of Second Vatican Council

### Description

**WORLD : Heterodox Cardinal Mario Grech recently declared in a speech to an Italian diocese that the Synod on Synodality is the “mature fruit” of the Second Vatican Council because the Synod has manifested its theology regarding the Church and its structure.**

“Thanks to the Synod, we are living the ecclesiological processes enunciated in the conciliar pages; for this reason, we can affirm that it is the ripe fruit of the Council,” said Grech, the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, during the Archdiocese of Catanzaro-Squillace’s synodal assembly on Saturday.

Grech called the Synod “a real Copernican turning point of the conciliar ecclesiology, that is, the common belonging to the people of God and the common dignity of all the baptized.”

His description of the Synod as a “Copernican turning point” for ecclesiology, which refers to the nature of the Catholic Church, suggests that Grech sees the Synod as bringing about a truly revolutionary change in the Church, even transforming its very earthly foundations — that is, its governing structure.

While Grech views the Synod as a positive development, he echoes the assessment of Matt Gaspers of Catholic Family News, who in 2022 criticized the Synod on Synodality for “updating” the Church according to “the ecclesiology of Vatican II.”

Gaspers then pointed out that the phrase “ecclesiology of the People of God” is clearly a reference to *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the second chapter of which is entitled “On the People of God.” Gaspers notes:

Arts. 15 and 16 outline the novel teaching that Holy Mother Church is somehow “linked with” all manner of non-Catholics (art. 15), the latter being “related in various ways to the people of God” (art. 16): non-Catholic Christians, Jews, Muslims, “those who in shadows

and images seek the unknown God,” and even “those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God” (“without blame,” despite the contrary teaching of Romans 1:18-20 and Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution Dei Filius on the Catholic Faith, Ch. 2, art. 1).

Furthermore, Grech’s association of ecclesiology with the “common dignity of all the baptized” appears to tie in with his idea that the Church’s governing structure should involve the input of all Catholics, just as the Synod on Synodality solicited the opinions of lay Catholics.

Indeed, the leading cardinal went on to suggest that this ecclesiology involves “listening to the people,” and noted that the Synod on Synodality in particular “made it possible to intercept the largest number of faithful,” including the “poor and the marginalized,” the Italian non-profit Comunità Nuova reported.

The Synod accomplished this through the unprecedented method of surveying ordinary lay Catholics across the world.

“To listen to the people of God is to listen to the voice of the [Church and not the](#) opinions of the people,” Grech said.

The cardinal’s idea that the thoughts of lay Catholics are not mere opinions but have authoritative weight in shaping the teachings of the Church is a totally novel one in the Catholic Church.

However, it is, as he stated, a development of the conception of “collegiality” that was newly formulated at the Second Vatican Council.

### **Vatican II conception of Church governance**

As Father Steven McDonald of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) explains, Lumen [Gentium](#) “introduced a new notion of collegiality, a democratization of the government within the Church,” by “suggesting that the college of bishops together with the pope exercises supreme power in the church.”

McDonald pointed out that this essentially “destroy(s) the personal authority of the pope over the cardinals and bishops, and even the faithful.”

He clarified that while “the pope and bishops should consult one another, their fellow priests, and the laity when appropriate,” this is only done so in order to “help those in authority” to make decisions.

This new “collegial” process of decision making has also eroded the authority of individual bishops, McDonald noted, by superseding their authority with that of bishops’ conferences, or even parish councils.

This “democratic” process of governance subverts the hierarchical nature of the Church intended by God, and also “unnecessarily hinders the actions of its leaders,” McDonald explained.

Thus, the SSPX and a number of Catholics maintain that Vatican II’s teaching on the nature of the Church’s structure contradicts perennial Church teaching — particularly the teachings of the First Vatican Council — on the hierarchical governance of the Church. That is, they believe Vatican II’s conception of collegiality is not Catholic.

Grech takes this new idea of collegiality to its fullest extent, even to the point of completely inverting the traditional teaching on Church authority.

According to Comunità Nuova, Grech stressed that “the Synod is the point of convergence of the dynamism of listening at all levels of the life of the Church, which begins by listening to the people, continues listening to the pastors, (and) culminates in the intervention of the bishop of Rome.”

“It is a matter of favoring a circularity, because the pyramidal Church is overcome by the Council,” he added, making clear that he understands the Synod, as well as Vatican II, as rejecting the top-down hierarchy of the Church.

An understanding of collegiality that accounts for the opinions of lay Catholics is not only problematic in theory — today, it is deeply problematic because the majority of Catholics do not accept all of Church teaching.

For example, a Pew Research study released Monday found that 83% of U.S. Catholics surveyed believe the Church should allow the use of contraception.

Grech himself has been responsible for promoting heterodox teaching, most notably by having co-authored with Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta the notorious Maltese bishops’ pastoral guidelines on *Amoris Laetitia*, which gave access to Holy Communion to divorced and civilly “remarried” Catholics living in sin who “with an informed and enlightened conscience ... acknowledge and believe that he or she are at peace with God.”

These guidelines were republished by the official Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano*.

In 2017, Grech “attacked a group of Maltese faithful Catholics” after it defended “real marriage against ‘unnatural’ homosexual ‘marriage’” in a full-page ad in a widely read paper.

The bishop called the ad “propaganda.” He has also accused opponents of these guidelines of having “attitudes” that “annihilate all hope in people,” calling them “prophets of doom.”

When Catholics begged for the sacraments during the COVID-19 lockdown, Grech said it is “curious that many people have complained about not being able to receive communion and celebrate funerals in church, but not as many have worried about how to reconcile with God and neighbor, how to listen to and celebrate the Word of God and how to live out a life of service.”

**BY Emily Mangiaracina**

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