

in a

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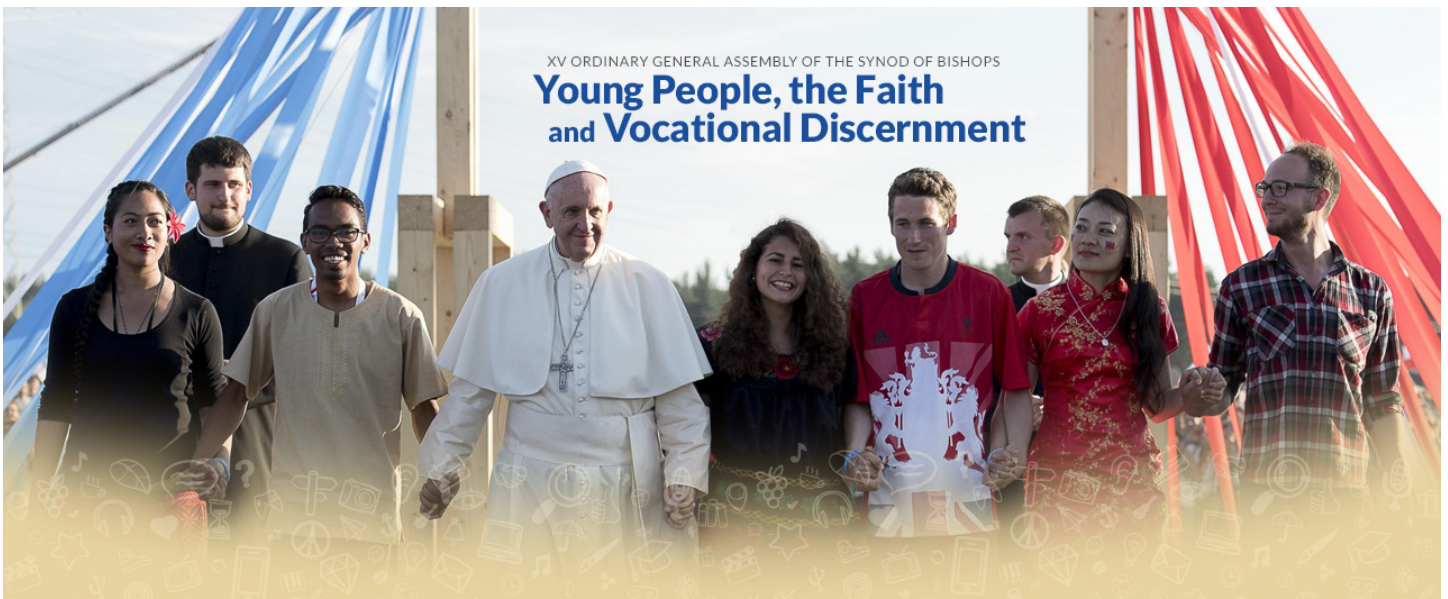
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A Church that does not listen shows herself closed to newness, closed to God's surprises, and cannot be credible, especially for the young who will inevitably turn away rather than approach. -Pope Francis

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD



At a recent gathering of youth at Holy Ghost Church in Opelousas, Louisiana an adult quietly commented “how many of these young people will still be with the Church after age 21”?

Present that day were approximately 400 young people gathered with the theme of “Sharing our Faith”. It was an uplifting sight to see so many young people actively involved in their Church. Catholic youth throughout the country witness their faith in similar group settings.

Yet the comment made about where will they be in the future sums up concerns within the future of our youth. For at the present time youth are increasingly leaving the Church.



The groundbreaking study titled **“GOING, GOING, GONE”** addressed the alienation of young people from the Church. The study painted a bleak picture of where youth are in regards the Church. Youth are dissatisfied with the Church for many reasons. They have a hunger for the holy but that the faith they grew up with is letting them down. In fact the study points out that already by the age of 13 young people are considering leaving the Church.

It is no wonder then that Pope Francis is concerned about the future of the Church. Time and again he speaks to youth encouraging them to voice their hopes and dreams. In 2013 the Pope said “I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses. I want the noise to go out. I want the church to go

out onto the streets. I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves.” (World Youth Day, July 25, 2013).

That is why at the present time there is a Synod in Rome that is trying to come to grips with the future of our youth. A Synod is a gathering of Bishops from throughout the world. The theme of this Synod is “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment”. The Synod began on October 3 and will continue until October 28, 2018.

A Preparatory Document for the gathering describes the purpose of the 15th Ordinary General Assembly as an opportunity for the Church “to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, and to ask young people to help her in identifying the most effective way to announce the Good News today.”

Who attends this Synod?

The Synod is not a “synod of youth,” but of bishops to discuss youth and young adults in light of their current realities and the journey of vocational discernment. There will be a few young adults (18-29) present as auditors, but the voting members of the Synod are bishop representatives from around the world.



Quotes from address of Pope Francis at opening of Synod

October 3, 2018

(Here are some passages from the Pope's address. Bold text highlights important statements.)

I would like to sincerely thank the young people connected to us now, and all the youth who in so many ways have made their voices heard. I thank them for having wagered that it is worth the effort to feel part of the Church or to enter into dialogue with her; worth the effort to have the Church as a mother, as a teacher, as a home, as a family, and, despite human weaknesses and difficulties, capable of radiating and conveying Christ's timeless message; worth the effort to hold onto the boat of the Church which, despite the world's cruel storms, continues to offer shelter and hospitality to everyone; worth the effort to listen to one another; worth the effort to swim against the tide and be bound by lofty values: family, fidelity, love, faith, sacrifice, service, eternal life.

Our responsibility here at the Synod is not to undermine them; but rather to show that they are right to wager: it truly is worth the effort, it is not a waste of time!



We are a sign of a Church that listens and journeys. The attitude of listening cannot be limited to the words we will exchange during the work of the Synod. The path of preparation for this moment has highlighted a Church that needs to listen, including those young people who often do not feel understood by the Church in their originality and therefore not accepted for who they really are, and sometimes even rejected. This Synod has the opportunity, the task and the duty to be a sign of a Church that really listens, that allows herself to be questioned by the experiences of those she meets, and who does not always have a ready-made answer.

CHURCH MUST LISTEN

A Church that does not listen shows herself closed to newness, closed to God's surprises, and cannot be credible, especially for the young who will inevitably turn away rather than approach.



Let us leave behind prejudice and stereotypes. A first step towards listening is to free our minds and our hearts from prejudice and stereotypes.

When we think we already know who others are and what they want, we really struggle to listen to them seriously. Relations across generations are a terrain in which prejudice and stereotypes take root with proverbial ease, so much so that we are often oblivious to it.

Young people are tempted to consider adults outdated; adults are tempted to regard young people as inexperienced, to know how they are and especially how they should be and behave. All of this can be an overwhelming obstacle to dialogue and to the encounter between generations. Most of those present do not belong to a younger generation, so it is clear that we must pay attention, above all, to the risk of talking about young people in categories and ways of thinking that are already outmoded. If we can avoid this risk, then we will help to bridge generations. Adults should overcome the temptation to underestimate the abilities of young people and not judge them negatively.

in a word or two



Let us therefore work to “spend time with the future”, to take from this Synod not merely a document – that generally is only read by a few and criticized by many – but above all concrete pastoral proposals capable of fulfilling the Synod’s purpose. In other words, to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands, and inspire in young people – all young people, with no one excluded – a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel.

Thank you.

Pope Francis

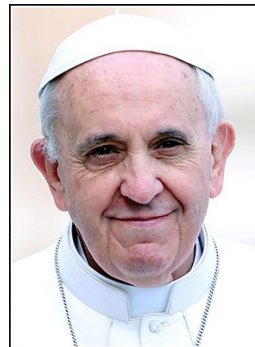
CLERICALISM

It is therefore necessary, on the one hand, to decisively overcome the scourge of clericalism. Listening and leaving aside stereotypes are powerful antidotes to the risk of clericalism, to which an assembly such as this is inevitably exposed, despite our intentions.

Clericalism arises from an elitist and exclusivist vision of vocation, that interprets the ministry received as a power to be exercised rather than as a free and generous service to be given. This leads us to believe that we belong to a group that has all the answers and no longer needs to listen or learn anything, or that pretends to listen.

Clericalism is a perversion and is the root of many evils in the Church: we must humbly ask forgiveness for this and above all create the conditions so that it is not repeated. We must, on the other hand, cure the virus of self-sufficiency and of hasty conclusions reached by many young people. An Egyptian proverb goes: “If there is no elderly person in your home, buy one, because you will need him”. To shun and reject everything handed down across the ages brings only a dangerous disorientation that sadly threatens our humanity, it brings a disillusionment which has invaded the hearts of

The future is not a threat to be feared, but is the time the Lord promises us when we will be able to experience communion with him, with our brothers and sisters, and with the whole of creation. We need to rediscover the reasons for our hope and, above all, to pass them on to young people who are thirsting for hope. As the Second Vatican Council affirmed: “We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping”



The youth say stupid things and they say good things, as we do, as everyone does. But hear them, speak with them, because we must learn from them and they must learn from me, from us.

— Pope Francis —

To view the web page for the Synod click the following link. A wealth of information including testimonies from youth along with the entire address of Pope Francis go to the following link:

<http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/news/address-by-pope-francis-at-the-opening-of-the-synod-of-bishops-.html>

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