

**Youth synod of old men** Myron J. Pereira, Mumbai, India

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## **Catholic Church crises over youth, celibate clergy and a lack of leadership roles for women**

### **De vieux hommes pour un synode sur la jeunesse**

The synod assembly on youth is being planned and discussed by senile old men. Amusing, but also tragic.

**Le synode sur la jeunesse est conduit par de vieux et séniles hommes. Amusant mais tragique.**

It is sometimes said that the Catholic Church today faces three crises, all of its own making.

**On dit que que l'Eglise catholique fait face à trois crises.**

The first is the crisis of a celibate clergy, which has exploded into the crisis of paedophile priests and a corrupt hierarchy that colluded with them.

**La première est celle d'un clergé célibataire. Elle a généré des prêtres pédophiles et une hiérarchie corrompue qui les a protégé.**

This used to be passed off as an "American" problem — until we realized that it is global — there are priest predators in Latin America, Europe, Africa and even in India, the sexual molesters of Catholic women.

The second crisis centers on the lack of leadership roles for women in the church. At this moment, this is still largely an issue in the West, but like the recent #Metoo movement, the social media makes its momentum felt across the universal church.

**La seconde est celle du rôle des femmes dans l'Eglise. C'est pour l'instant un problème occidental mais le mouvement « Metoo » a montré comment les média sociaux pouvaient répandre une question.**

Women — educated, competent and dedicated — will no longer be relegated to arranging flowers on the altar and singing in the choir. Nor will they be put off by bogus theological arguments and references to canon law. They want a significant role in the running of the church, and they want it now.

**Les femmes veulent un rôle significatif et elles le veulent maintenant.**

The third crisis is over the treatment of youth. This is in fact why the present synod, the 15th to be held since Vatican II, has been called: 'Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment'.

**La troisième crise est celle de la façon dont est traitée la jeunesse : c'est la raison de ce synode.**

The pope is worried that no matter how many of the young want to take selfies with him, they just aren't interested in going to church. In fact, across Europe and in many parts of the United States, empty Catholic churches are being purchased by people of other faiths!

En Europe et aux USA les églises se vident et les jeunes ne sont pas intéressés à les remplir.

So, the Oct. 3-25 synod is a three-week deliberation on what young people want of the church. Note, however, that the entire deliberations will be held by senile men, aged 55 or older.

Toutes les délibérations du synode seront conduits par des hommes de 55 ans ou plus.

Nonetheless, Pope Francis has named some 30 women and several young adults as "collaborators" and "observers" to the synod. They will join the discussions, but will not have a vote on the final proposals given to the pope.

Même si le pape a nommé 30 femmes et de jeunes adultes en tant qu'observateurs ils n'auront aucun rôle dans la rédaction des propositions remises au pape.

So, the first thing bishops need to admit is that they don't know how to evangelize their contemporaries.

The second thing they must do is to listen to people, listen to youth — especially the youth that does not go to church.

Les évêques doivent admettre qu'ils ne savent pas évangéliser leurs contemporains et qu'ils doivent écouter les jeunes, spécialement ceux qui ne vont pas à l'église.

What in fact, do young people want?

Many say that they don't want religion; they want spirituality. This is more than just a question of semantics. Religion is understood as the set of all cultic practices, ethical codes and creedal definitions that religious leaders enforce upon their members, usually under threat.

Les jeunes ne veulent pas de religion, celle que l'on impose. Ils veulent de la spiritualité c'est à dire une expérience qui libère, une attitude et une discipline intérieures.

'Spirituality' by contrast, is seen as a more liberating experience. It refers to an attitude, an interior discipline which is open, all-embracing and all-nurturing.

Young people are attracted to Eastern spiritualities such as yoga, Zen, Dao; and now increasingly to a 'whole earth' spirituality that inculcates a disposition of conservation, austerity and stewardship.

Take the most critical issue for young people in India today: the unemployment problem. Young men and women are angry that they cannot get the job they want, and therefore feel they have no future. What does the church say to young people like these?

Que dit l'Eglise aux jeunes indiens qui pensent ne pas avoir de futur ?

The Catholic faith as it has developed in these last decades is seen as a system of moral control, and little else. It wants obedience to doctrine. But it offers no new and creative ways of being, of relating. Sad, but true.

La religion catholique est reçue comme un système de control moral et doctrinaire. Elle n'offre pas de perspective. Triste mais vrai.

Yet another hunger among young people today is for community, fellowship and bonding. The church does encourage community — but of a stratified, segmented kind. Each member in the church has prescribed roles and functions (with priests being always at the top), and they are all deemed to be "God-given".

**Si l'Eglise encourage la vie communautaire elle le fait de manière hiérarchique avec des prêtres toujours au sommet.**

But why can't women aspire to priesthood, ask young people? And why is the Catholic Church so dead against a married clergy?

**Pourquoi les femmes ne peuvent-elles pas devenir prêtres et pourquoi l'Eglise refuse un clergé marié ?**

Years ago, Pope St. John Paul II coined the term "the new evangelization", and Pope Benedict XVI followed him. It was a belated recognition that the world had changed and that the older forms of proclaiming the Gospel no longer held. Unfortunately, all that came out of the new evangelization was the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and nothing much beyond.

**Tout ce qui est venu de la "nouvelle évangélisation" est le catéchisme de l'Eglise catholique et rien d'autre.**

But no one was ever evangelized by a textbook. It is people, individuals, who proclaim the Gospel.

**On n'évangélise pas avec un bouquin.**

It was left to Pope Francis to show by word and example that the core of the new evangelization is compassion and mercy. And by his actions — kissing the feet of women prisoners, embracing disfigured men, letting little children run around him — he created a new image of the church, of the Gospel.

What are the major issues which grip young people today? Persistent injustice. Growing inequality. Inter-faith issues, especially regarding marriage and religious tolerance. Working for reconciliation among those who have a history of violence. And almost everywhere, care of the environment has emerged as a major challenge to young and old alike.

**Quels sont les principaux problèmes des jeunes ? L'injustice, les inégalités, les problèmes inter-religieux, l'environnement...**

As all psychologists know, a crisis ('judgment' in Greek) is both a disaster and an opportunity. The 'old way' of doing things has collapsed.

**Une crise (jugement en grec) est une catastrophe et une opportunité.**

One realizes that one can't continue in the same manner any longer. So, a crisis is a time of great vulnerability. The church can be hurt and hurt badly. But a crisis is also an opportunity. Can one seize the moment to do things differently, and not just survive but prevail? A crisis can also become a time of growth into something new and beautiful.

**C'est un temps de grande vulnérabilité mais où il devient possible de faire les choses autrement, un temps de croissance dans le neuf et le beau.**

The three crises in the modern church have the capacity to re-make it in the likeness of the Gospels. May the synod (another Greek word, meaning "walking together") lead us together to where God wishes us to be.

Puisse le synode (marcher ensemble en grec) nous conduire où Dieu souhaite que nous allions.