

DISSIDENTS ARE “ASTONISHED” BY VATICAN EDICT

In 2019, Pope Francis formally announced that the “Synodal Way” had begun. He called for a forum whereby the clergy and laity would weigh several issues facing the Church that need to be discussed, leading possibly to some reforms. From the beginning, Catholic dissidents seized the moment to promote their agenda, and nowhere was this more evident than in Germany.

Now the Vatican has stepped in warning the Germans that they need to tap their brakes. In a letter released by the Holy See on July 21, it was said that the German “Synodal Way” was guilty of overreach, maintaining it “does not have the power to compel bishops and the faithful to adopt new forms of governance and new orientations to doctrine and morals.”

Moreover, it said no reforms could be countenanced “before an agreement had been reached at the level of the universal Church,” for if that were to happen it “would constitute a violation of ecclesial communion and a threat to the unity of the Church.”

The admonition could not be more clear: the German bishops have jumped the line. They immediately said they were “astonished” by the rebuke. They shouldn’t have been.

In April, more than 100 cardinals and bishops from around the world issued a “fraternal open letter” to the German bishops, sounding the alarms. They even went so far as to say that their radical reforms carry “the potential for schism.” They did not exaggerate.

Predictably, American Catholic dissidents such as Fordham’s David Gibson said the letter was “rather astonishing.” Their capacity for astonishment appears to be endless.

Even before these cardinals and bishops sounded off, Pope Francis expressed his concerns. In 2019, he wrote to the German bishops warning them not to seek autonomy—we are one Church. Cardinal Walter Kasper, a prominent liberal German leader, also expressed his misgivings with the radical agenda that was unfolding.

In the United States, Denver Archbishop Samuel Aquila, noting what the German bishops were up to, released a 15-page letter in 2021 stating similar concerns; it was signed by many cardinals and bishops.

What was that agenda? Gay couples have had their “unions” blessed in defiance of the Vatican. Importantly, votes have already taken place saying gay marriage is not sinful, thus declaring homosexuality in “marriage” to be licit. They also want to do away with mandatory celibacy and allow for married priests. Essentially, the German “Synodal Way” is seeking to Protestantize the Catholic Church.

The dissidents want more. Their focus is fourfold: a change in the Church’s teaching on homosexuality, the ordination of women, allowing for married priests, and more input from the laity.

Homosexuality is at the top of the list. Marc Frings is the secretary-general of the Central Committee of German Catholics. He is quite open in declaring the “Synodal Way” to be “a conscious statement against the current Catholic catechism.” He wants nothing less than a wholesale welcoming of gay marriage and homosexuality.

What is most perverse about this agenda is that the reforms are being touted as a way of addressing clergy sexual abuse. As Bill Donohue detailed in *The Truth about Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*, it is impossible to understand the scandal without giving due recognition to the critical role that homosexual priests played in generating

it. To think that the corrective is to legitimize homosexuality is more than preposterous—it is suicidal.

The next synod assembly is in September; it is expected to end next March. The Holy Father has his work cut out for himself. When calls for prudential reforms are interpreted as demands for a revolution, the extremists cannot be allowed to prevail. They have already done much damage to the Catholic Church.