

SYNOD INTERIM REPORT STIRS CONTROVERSY



Bill Donohue comments on the interim report by the Synod of Bishops:

This is an interim report, and even when it is completed next week, it will not be definitive. That will not happen until next year when the synod meets. Still, this report has elicited much controversy, with more to come.

The midterm report tries to walk a delicate line between embracing the Church's traditional teachings on marriage while at the same time extending a welcoming hand to those in irregular relationships.

For example, it speaks of "the value and consistency of natural marriage," maintaining that "unions between people of the same sex cannot be considered on the same footing as matrimony between man and woman." This affirms the traditional understanding of marriage and leaves no wiggle room for change.

On other hand, it says "Homosexuals have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community," and that the Church needs to recognize "the positive reality of civil weddings and...cohabitation." It is not clear what "gifts" homosexuals, or heterosexuals for that matter, bring, and to whom. The data on civil unions are scarce, but not so for cohabitation: in most instances, the data show that couples that cohabit before

marriage have a higher divorce rate than those who do not. So we need to know why “shacking up” may be a plus.

The vector of change indicates a more pastoral stance toward those involved in non-traditional partnerships without substantively changing the Church’s commitment to marriage as the union between a man and a woman. How this will play out is uncertain. What is lacking in the interim report is clarity; this is the key source of the controversy.

It should be noted that the Catholic League exists to defend the right of the Church’s voice to be heard. Whatever the teaching body of the Church decides, the Magisterium (the pope in communion with the bishops), is what we defend.