



# CATHOLIC LEAGUE

*For Religious  
and  
Civil Rights*

December 15, 2021

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Cardinal Mario Grech  
General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops  
Via della Conciliazione 34  
00120 Vatican City

Your Eminence:

As president of the largest Catholic civil rights organization in the United States, my job is to defend individual Catholics against discrimination and the institutional Church from defamation. The latter ineluctably involves a defense of Church teachings and strictures.

I am writing to you because recent news reports indicate that your communications manager, Thierry Bonaventura, has announced that he has restored a link to New Ways Ministry's (NWM) webinar on synodality that had been taken down following considerable criticism. Moreover, he has extended an apology to NWM.

Like so many other Catholics, we were surprised to learn that a video by a dissident organization—one that has been summarily rebuked by the Vatican and the U.S. bishops for decades—would be accepted by the Vatican as a legitimate Catholic contribution to the synodal consultations. We were relieved when this post was taken down. You can imagine how we felt when it was restored. Worse was an apology to an organization that not only has no standing in the Catholic Church—it actively seeks to undermine it.

What I have said is not a matter of opinion.

I am sending via fax and the U.S. mail a copy of the "Notification Regarding Sister Jeannine Gramick, SSND, and Father Robert Nugent, SDS," a publication of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, written by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (pope emeritus) in 1999.

Ratzinger noted that in 1984, "James Cardinal Hickey, the Archbishop of Washington, following the failure of a number of attempts at clarification, informed them [NWM] that they could no longer undertake their activities in that Archdiocese. At the same time, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life ordered them to separate themselves totally and completely from *New Ways Ministry*, adding that they were not to exercise any apostolate without faithfully presenting the Church's teaching regarding the intrinsic evil of homosexual acts."

Ratzinger then detailed the many attempts by Church officials to persuade Gramick and Nugent to abide by Church teachings on this subject. He concluded that they "are permanently prohibited from any pastoral work involving homosexual persons and are ineligible, for an undetermined period, for any office in their respective religious institutes."

Three years later, in 2002, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, wrote that "New Ways Ministry does not promote the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church."

In that same year, Archbishop Thomas Kelly of Louisville told organizers of the group's conference that they should not celebrate the Eucharist at the NWM event. Following suit in 2007 was St. Paul-Minneapolis Archbishop Harry Flynn: he barred NWM's national conference from celebrating the Eucharist.

In 2010, Cardinal Francis George, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, stated that he can assure Catholics that "in no manner is the position proposed by New Ways Ministry in conformity with Catholic teaching and in no manner is this organization authorized to speak on behalf of the Catholic Church or to identify itself as a Catholic organization."

In 2011, Cardinal Donald Wuerl of the Washington Archdiocese, and chairman of the Committee on Doctrine, joined with Oakland Bishop Salvatore Cordileone, and chairman of the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on the Defense of Marriage, issuing an affirmation of Cardinal George's denunciation of NWM.

Were all of these senior members of the Catholic Church wrong about NWM? Or is the decision to welcome them to the synodal process wrong? They can't both be right.

I would like to know by January 10 what your response is. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.  
President