

The Synod: The Vatican intervenes in the world

by Vivian Freyre Zoakos

What the Extraordinary Synod of the Roman Catholic Church accomplished, during its two-weeks of discussions from Nov. 25 through Dec. 8, was to chart a path for an "opening to the world" that would do away with the anarchistic "pluralism" of the previous 20 years. The Church emerged from the synod, at least in principle, both re-rooted in its unique Apostolic, Augustinian tradition, and committed to using that tradition to intervene into world affairs at the highest levels. Hence the meeting's world-historic significance, as previously emphasized by *EIR*.

Called by Pope John Paul II in late January to evaluate the implementation of the Vatican II Council that ended 20 years ago, the Extraordinary Synod diplomatically but unmistakably delivered a blow to *both* extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing tendencies inside the Church. In directing the workings of the synod, Pope John Paul II and his closest associates cut through the artificial divisions which had led to the well-documented chaos in Catholic affairs that spread progressively since the close of the Vatican II Council in 1965.

An informed perusal of the synod's concluding report, *Relatio Finalis*, (see *EIR*, Dec. 20, 1985) establishes all these facts beyond any doubt. This is particularly true if the report is taken together with an unprejudiced and informed view of what took place at the Vatican both inside the synod itself, and in various other meetings and papal audiences occurring during the synodal period.

The issue of the Church and economic policy affords an

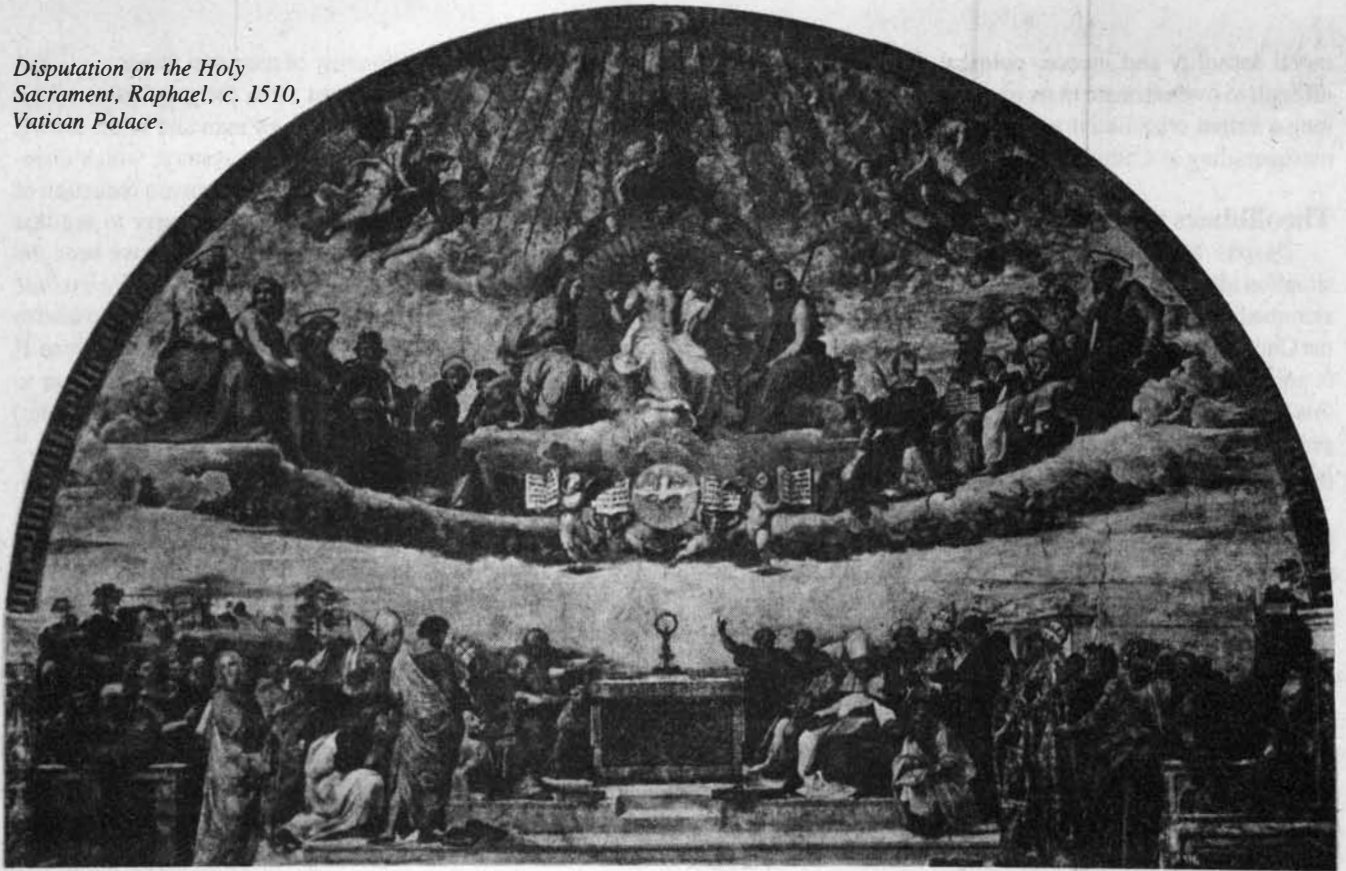
excellent example of the achievements of this synod, against the dangerous fallacies of both the left- and right-wing tendencies in the Church.

Before Vatican II, despite the beginnings of greater *overt* (as opposed to *de facto*) Church involvement in temporal matters dating from around the turn of the century, the Catholic Church was relatively sealed from official involvement in and pronouncements upon non-pastoral matters. Vatican II ushered in a phase of official *engagement* in the external world. As is well known, however, the intervening period has been fraught with enormous abuses, particularly visible in such national churches as that of the United States and Great Britain.

The so-called right-wing extreme of the Church and its fringes (e.g., the Archbishop Lefebvre phenomenon) have been clamoring for, and were hoping the synod would be the occasion for, a "restoration" of the previous Church model, including a disengagement from world affairs. This would mean, among other things, Church silence on matters that are shaping the continued survival of the human race itself, as exemplified by the current international depression and consequent genocide conditions in the Third World.

The left-wing extremists, best characterized by the Theology of Liberation cultists, have instead sought to destroy the very foundation of Catholicism. Their aim has been to transform the Church into a pluralistic church, composed of national federations of churches, committed to a Marxist-based, class analysis of society and all accompanying

*Disputation on the Holy
Sacrament, Raphael, c. 1510,
Vatican Palace.*



acoutrements of socialistic-liberalism: i.e., support for “national liberation struggles” (destabilization operations, often Soviet-backed), a “peacenik” ideology (cf. the pastoral on American economic policy, supportive of the International Monetary Fund, issued by the U.S. Conference of Bishops), a “small is beautiful” and “self-help” economic model for the developing sector (certain to worsen the already hellish conditions of that part of the world), and so forth.

Shunning the “right-wing” position, the concluding Pastoral Message of the synod said categorically that the Church must and will involve itself in such issues as the “international debt” situation. There would be no “restoration” of former complacency.

But the Church also defined an informed standpoint of religious and scientific morality as the basis for its intervention in international economic policy, doing this from a standpoint which harkens back to the developmental policies of Paul VI’s great *Populorum Progressio* encyclical—to the chagrin of the “theolibbers.” This was done most concisely by Cardinal Ratzinger in his keynote speech at the “Church and the Economy” seminar sponsored by the Vatican (Nov. 21-23).

As already extensively reported in this magazine, Ratzinger zeroed in on the *immorality* of the free-market liberal economics ideology founded by Adam Smith and practiced by such as “Mr. Rockefeller,” for preaching the absolute division between individual and human morality and economic policy formulation. He also lambasted free-market

economics for its *incompetence*—a fact proven, he pointed out, by an international economic picture today which rivals the military strategic situation in its threat to the continued survival of mankind. He called for a partnership of economic expertise and morality, to fashion a new approach to international economic policy that will redress the intolerable conditions of today, particularly in the developing sector.

Ratzinger was not speaking merely on his own behalf. John Paul II’s speech during his audience with a group of Ibero-American heads of state and government leaders, during the course of the synod on Dec. 6, focused itself uniquely on that continent’s crushing debt burden. He repeatedly urged the Ibero-American leaders to unify their continent as a precondition for coming to grips with its crushing indebtedness.

Most people took this to be a reference to the fight of Peruvian President Alan García, the Ibero-American nemesis of the International Monetary Fund, who was also the model held up at the “Church and the Economy” conference by the attending Ibero-American prelates. The Pope had visited Peru immediately upon his announcement of the synod, on Jan. 26, and has maintained an exchange of correspondence and visits with the Peruvian President since.

As stated, the concluding synodal message pointedly referred to Third World indebtedness as one of the pressing matters which the Church cannot shun, but which it must address. Thus, Pope John Paul and the Church as a totality, despite any deficiencies of its national leaders, are bringing to bear on a decisive issue of human survival a power of

moral authority and, hence, political weight that would be difficult to overestimate in its importance. In the process, the long-awaited crackdown against cultism and degeneration, masquerading as Catholicism, was finally begun.

Theolibbers slammed

Despite attempts to put the best possible face on the situation after the fact, the liberation theologians were clearly slammed at the synod. This is of the greatest importance, if the Church is to carry out a rational intervention into economic policy. But of equal weight is the long-awaited attack that this represented against the most virulent, anti-Christian, and pernicious of the degenerate cultist ideologies that have flourished in portions of the Church since the end of Vatican II.

The controversy broke out into the open Nov. 22 at the pre-synod meeting of the College of Cardinals, in what was doubtless a prepared intervention on the part of Ernesto Cardinal Corripio Ahumada. The speech was subsequently published in the Vatican's newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*. Addressing the College in the name of "the majority of the Latin American Cardinals," Corripio Ahumada expressed his solidarity and gratitude to the Pope and to Ratzinger for their interventions against liberation theology. "We wish," the Cardinal said, "to greet in a particular way the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [headed by Ratzinger] for the condemnation of the mistakes of certain liberation theologians who, with the so-called 'Popular Church,' generated so much damage to the faithful."

Archbishop José Ivo Lorscheiter of Fortaleza, Brazil, took the lead role in defense of liberation theology. His speech to that effect was allowed to appear in the Spanish edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*. In it, Lorscheiter even went so far as to defend Leonardo Boff, the liberation theologian silenced by Ratzinger's Congregation this year for his theolibber heresies. On the day of the article's appearance, however, Colombian Bishop Dario Castrillon Hoyos, who is secretary general of the Latin American Bishops Conferences, gave a press conference refuting Castrillon Hoyos' formulations. "I am absolutely opposed to any type of liberation theology. . . . I do not recognize a church with machine guns as the Church of Christ."

Other denunciations of the Brazilian prelate followed swiftly, including from his own Brazilian compatriots such as Eugenio Cardinal Sales, Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro. The upshot of the battle was some very clear language in the concluding document. *Relatio Finalis* condemns the post-Conciliar excesses done in the name of "opening the Church to the world," and particularly condemns any conception of secularism that seeks to bring in through the back door the evils of our current degenerate society.

The document reads: "[T]here has . . . been lacking a spiritual discernment, not distinguishing strictly between a legitimate opening of the Council to the world and the acceptance of the mentality and ordering of the values of a secularized world. . . . Without any doubt, the Council af-

firmed the legitimate autonomy of temporal things. . . . But it is something totally different from the secularism which consists of an autonomistic vision of man and of the world, which leaves aside the dimension of mystery, which disregards and even denies it. This immanentism is a reduction of the integral vision of man. . . . [W]e are sorry to see that sometimes theological discussions in our day have been the occasion of confusions among the faithful. . . . We exclude a facile adaptation [to the modern world] which could lead to the secularization of the Church. . . . After the Vatican II Council, the Church became more aware of its mission to serve the poor, the oppressed, the emarginated. . . . [But] this preferential option . . . is not understood as exclusive."

So much for the Marxian class analysis of the theolibbers.

Collegiality defined

One of the most important, if little understood, issues decided at the Extraordinary Synod was the question of "collegiality"—an issue not accidentally addressed by all the bishops and cardinals who attacked Liberation Theology. Superficially, collegiality would seem to be a mere question of power and, from that standpoint, would appear to reduce to the following: Is power in the Church held by the bishops and particularly, in the post-Conciliar Church, by the national conferences of bishops, with the Pope a mere *primus inter pares*, or does power flow from above, from God through the Papacy down to the bishops?

The document submitted to the synod by the Conference of Bishops of England and Wales answered this question with unqualified pluralism. Power, it said, flows from below, from the laity, through its bishops and their National Conference of Bishops, upward. The synod document submitted by the American bishops was authored from an identical standpoint, albeit with more circumspection in its language.

The British document went so far as to claim a kind of infallibility for the laity in its totality. Therein lies a clue as to the deeper meaning of collegiality. In other words, is truth a mere matter of opinion, a matter to be settled by a majority consensus of the faithful? Or is truth one, is it unchanging and unique, unattached to current opinion? If the latter is the case, as the Church has always correctly maintained, then a pluralist answer is unacceptable.

The *Relatio Finalis*, under the leadership of the Pope, thus gave a categorical answer to the collegiality matter: "[T]he theology of collegiality is much fuller than its simple juridical aspect. . . . [N]o distinction can be made between the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops, considered collectively, but [only] between the Roman Pontiff alone and the Roman Pontiff together with the Bishops . . . because the college [of bishops] exists with its 'head' and never without it. . . . [P]luriformity must be distinguished from pluralism. When pluriformity is a true richness and bears plenitude, this is true catholicity. Instead, the pluralism of fundamentally opposed positions leads to dissolution, destruction, and loss of identity. . . . [emphasis added]."