
Synod: Austria, results of national consultation. Women in the Church, participation of lay people, clericalism, sexual morality

The core topics addressed in the contribution that the Austrian Catholic Church has sent to Rome for the Universal Synod are the same that “have occupied the Catholic Church in Austria for decades”, explained Theologian Regina Polak, one of the members of the committee in charge of drafting the synthesis: the topics of women (including the diaconate and the priesthood), the participation of lay people, transparency in episcopal appointments, clericalism, youth, and sexual morality. New topics, by contrast, include the “loss of relevance in society” and the question of how the Church deals with same-sex couples and various sexual identities. Although there is no unanimity, there is “astonishing homogeneity” in that those involved in the life of the Church “expect reforms in this regard”. The contributions also stressed that the synodal process in Austria “should be continued”, not “as an end in itself” but as a way to ensure that “the Church can live out its task, its mission, in the best possible way”. If the Church’s social and charitable involvement is essential, it is also essential to care for community life in parishes. The requests include: removing the obstacles that prevent participation and transparency, and effecting change that is already possible at the local Church level, while also focusing on issues pertaining to other levels (ordination of women, celibacy of priests, sexual morality).

Valentina Bombelli