

**A RESPONSE TO THE FINAL DOCUMENT
OF THE PRE-SYNOD 2018**

2018 – 2019

Part I

Preface: We are a group of young Catholics, aged 16 to 29, who are passionate about practicing and living our faith in adherence to the Magisterium and Catechism of the Catholic Church. In light of the process and discussions from the English Language Facebook Group for the Pre-Synod Meeting on the Youth, we have formed organically and spontaneously in response to our unrepresented or underrepresented pleas for greater adherence to and promotion of reverence for liturgical practice, both in the Ordinary and Extraordinary forms of the Mass; renewed and enhanced practice of the Church's ancient devotions; promotion of the desires of the youth in the Church; and for more thorough and demanding explanations and teachings for the young of the doctrines and dogmas of the Catholic Church. We represent a cross section of Catholic youth from countries as disparate as the United States of America, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Poland, Ireland, England and more.

We have not formed for the sake of politicking of any kind, and we wish upfront to state our deep gratitude and debt to the Pre-Synod Meeting group and its work, and to the Pre-Synod process in general. Though we are saddened and disappointed by the Final Document of that process, we wish to proceed in filial charity toward the leadership of the Church, and with our eyes on the truth. This document should in no way supplant the Final Document of the Pre-Synod on the Youth, but should instead supplement that document as an additional tool for the use of the synod fathers in Rome this Fall. To that end, we have entrusted this group and our desire to be heard to our Blessed Mother, under her titles of *Sedes Sapientiae*, the Seat of Wisdom and *Mater Ecclesiae*, Mother of the Church.

Introduction: Before we come to the substance of this document, the first of two, we will describe the nature of our community and the structure and process that drove the development of this document and its mate, to be released on the Feast of Corpus Christi. This explanation also includes some raw data we have collected from the English Language Pre-Synod Facebook page, which we have analyzed in order to demonstrate a certain disconnect between the Final Document and our concerns.

In the hours and days following the release of the Final Document of the Pre-Synod Meeting, many of us were shocked and saddened that our participation and hopes for the meeting in Rome seemed ill-founded, and we sensed that our voices had not made it into the Final Document. Encouraged by our Holy Father Francis' Palm Sunday sermon to not to be silenced, several members of the English Language Group for the Pre-Synod meeting created a separate, private page and began to organize to present a unified document, written by volunteer authors, and peer reviewed by the wider community of Catholic youth. As with any grassroots community, we moved at various paces, sometimes at a rush, other times more haltingly, but we were determined to be heard. We identified six topics on which we thought more needed to be said than what was presented in the Final Document, and set about drafting and redrafting our thoughts. These topics were the liturgy, traditional practices and devotions of the Catholic Faith, the teaching of the Faith, both in her catechetical endeavors and in her doctrines, authentic masculinity and femininity (especially the crisis affecting men in many countries and societies today), mental health and that field's intersection with the Catholic Faith, and the pestilence of war and persecution. We speak to each of these topics in the only capacity we have, which is as young, Catholic people trying to feel our way through a world we do not understand and in which we

earnestly desire to follow our Lord, Jesus Christ and the guidance of His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

As the community grew, we realized we had to present a clear, statistical case for our existence. To that end, we compiled the following data and performed the analysis of it. In Figure 1. below, we present the number of comments and reactions for each of the fifteen questions asked of the participants by the moderators and administrators of the English Language group for the Pre-Synod Meeting Facebook page, both in terms of the question to which those comments respond and the topic to which comments pertain. If we tally the total number of comments from each question, as found in the far right column, we see that this Language Group produced *1206 comments*. If we then tally the total number of comments for each column representing a topic or subtopic, we see *27 comments* requesting a greater focus on the Extraordinary Form of the Liturgy of the Mass, or *2.24% of the total comments of the Language Group*. Running the same analysis for the other columns yields *62 comments, or 5.14% of the total comments* requesting greater reverence in the Liturgy of the Mass in the Ordinary Form; *177 comments, or 14.68% of the total comments* requesting stronger emphasis on our Traditions and Devotions; *131 comments, or 10.86% of the total comments* requesting stronger Catechesis in youth instruction; *68 comments, or 5.64% of the total comments* requesting clarification and defense of church Doctrine; *1 comment, or 0.08% of the total comments* requesting the church address the Crisis Affecting men; *16 comments, or 1.33% of the total comments* asking for the Church to address the Mental Health issues affecting the youth; and *5 comments, or 0.41% of the total comments* requesting the Church address War as it affects the youth.

As work proceeded on the drafts and as feedback from the community and this data became available, the Administrators of the new page suggested that the community publish two separate documents. This first document presents, in detail, our concerns and hopes regarding matters to do with the interior life of the church and its members. These topics are the liturgy, the traditions of the Catholic Church, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Our second document will present in detail our concerns and hopes for issues facing youth in the culture that the church must respond to, including the topics of the crises facing man, which is tied closely to understanding authentic masculinity, femininity, and the relationships between, the topic of mental health and the Church, and the topic of war. These topics, of course, are not the only troubles facing us in modernity. We could always answer the questions represented in the Pre-Synod Facebook Group again and deliver that, but such action is not our intention. We earnestly reiterate that in these documents we do not wish to supplant the Final Document of the Pre-Synod Meeting, but we hope to supplement that document with greater detail. We have no authority, we make no claims to wisdom, we seek no political power. We ask only that these instruments of our voices be heard, and be allowed to represent our experiences, hopes and dreams to bishops across the world when they meet in Rome for the formal Synod on the Youth.

	1. Liturgy a. Requests for Extraordinary Form (in brackets: number of reacts – like, love etc. - these comments have received)	1. Liturgy b. Requests for beauty and reverence in the liturgy in general (not mentioning EF)	2. Tradition and devotion	3. Teaching a. Catechesis and methodology	3. Teaching b. Dogma and doctrine (especially requests for solid teaching and disapproval for any changes in doctrine)	4. Crises facing men	5. Mental health	6. War	Total number of all comments under this question (in brackets: total number of all reactions for all the comments under this question)
Q1 #WhoAmI	1 (0)	2 (4)	8 (0)	20 (13)	5 (5)	0	5 (0)	2 (0)	114 (31)
Q2 #Differences	0	2 (1)	23 (15)	7 (7)	2 (3)	0	0	0	85 (16)
Q3 #Future	1 (1)	3 (3)	27 (13)	9 (9)	1 (1)	0	2 (1)	3 (0)	97 (16)
Q4 #DigitalWorld	0	0	8 (7)	13 (16)	1 (1)	0	4 (6)	0	77 (14)
Q5 #InteriorLife	3 (4)	15 (15)	49 (21)	12 (4)	2 (2)	0	1 (0)	0	80 (17)
Q6 #Jesus	0	1 (3)	0	2 (2)	1 (3)	0	0	0	85 (36)
Q7 #IBelieve	2 (11)	6 (18)	4 (1)	0	2 (3)	1	0	0	73 (45)
Q8 #Called	0	1 (1)	0	15 (14)	1 (1)	0	0	0	80 (47)
Q9 #Choices	0	2 (14)	14 (17) (many of them mention Ignatian Spirituality)	18 (24)	0	0	0	0	80 (71)
Q10 #Guide	0	0	3 (3)	0	6 (3)	0	0	0	86 (44)
Q11 #Church	9 (38)	18 (70)	15 (77)	16 (47)	30 (184)	0	1 (4)	0	135 (363)
Q12 #ActivelyInvolved	1	2 (3)	1 (0)	4 (2)	0	0	1 (3)	0	71 (33)
Q13 #Places	0	0	0	2 (3)	0	0	1 (1)	0	68 (35)
Q14 #Proposals	9 (94)	8 (52)	14 (54) (many of them mention organising retreats and adorations)	9 (39)	11 (95)	0	1 (2)	0	76 (182)
Q15 #WaysAndMeans	1 (0)	2 (1)	11 (6) (many of them mention sacrament of confession)	4 (2)	6 (3)	0	0	0	70 (22)

Figure 1. Raw Data of Comment and Reactions by Question and by Topic of the English Language Group.

Section I. Liturgy

As young people, we yearn for the Sacred in a world offering us the profane, for the meaningful in a world offering us the banal, for the peaceful in a world offering us the frenetic. We long for Catholic communities whose liturgies reflect what we believe: that in the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus Christ is truly present to us. We yearn for reverence in the liturgy in homage to the Lord of the world who comes down to us in the Eucharist, for the nourishment of our souls, and for the evangelization of the world. For us, Liturgy is not merely a way of worship, a set of rules, or an obligation. It is our way of life, “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed [and]... the font from which all her power flows.”¹ Through this sacrament, the work of our salvation is achieved. We believe and affirm this teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and desire its full realization in the celebration of the liturgy.

A deeply spiritual liturgy, full of wisdom and peace, is vital in the modern world. The postmodern culture we are living in, a culture of relativism and apatheism (total spiritual indifference), makes it difficult to touch the sacred and remain in true contact with God. Unfortunately, what we see around us in the Church is no less worrying. Many priests have lost their fascination of the liturgy. Mass is seen by them as a duty, an obligation they must fulfill, rather than a joyful service to the one true God. On the other hand, other priests incorrectly insert their own innovations into liturgy which results in a mere communal meeting or kind of entertainment, focused on people, not God. Generally, apart from some honorable exceptions, the liturgical life of our churches and parishes is far from ideal, either because of dullness or lack of liturgical reverence. This state of affairs presents a grave danger to the faith of the Catholic laity. If the “Source and Summit” does not function properly, all other aspects of the spiritual life are also affected.

Just as the celebration of the Mass is the most powerful means of sanctification, it is also the most powerful catechetical tool we have. It is the most recognizable sign of the Catholic Faith. For many people, Mass attendance is the *sole* marker of their Catholic Faith. Sunday Mass is the Church’s most consistent, constant, and sometimes only contact with the faithful. The Church has access to many young people in their formative years through the Mass and through preparation for the Sacraments, especially First Holy Communion. The value of the Mass as a Catechetical tool is therefore immeasurable; how better to teach people *what* Catholics believe about the Eucharist and its role in our salvation than by showing them. It is important to ensure that the celebration of the Mass is a worthy reflection of the faith we hold. Moreover, the Mass, when reverently said, is a genuine tool of evangelization. Many of the faithful have fallen away from the Church because they had seen no value in the Liturgy. Conversely, many converts choose the faith because they are moved by the spirituality, wisdom, and beauty that is presented to them in the Mass.

¹ Cfr. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

Our Experience of the Liturgy

The general consensus of faithful Catholic youth is that it has become increasingly difficult to gain nourishment from the Mass. Many of us feel wounded by the way in which the ancient symbolism of the liturgy, which fully reflects the Faith of the Communion to which we belong, has been cast aside in favor of sometimes vague and recently-introduced symbolism. We have, many of us, grown up in parishes that have left behind the treasures of our patrimony, and replaced them with unfitting substitutes. Most of our parishes have, in many ways, failed to approach the liturgy with the reverence and solemnity due to it, making it less godly, purging it of magnificence. Many of us have experienced liturgies that seem barely recognizable to the rich Catholic liturgical tradition passed down through the ages, and developed by numerous documents.

The replacement of traditional sacred music with modern secular music is an example of the setting aside of the sacred for the banal. To us, much of the modern music used in the Mass has no place in the tradition of the Church and ought to have no place in the Mass. These types of music are designed to induce strong, unintelligible emotions which are not reflected on, but feel in an instinctive way. Modern music used in Mass is often meant to induce euphoria through noise (especially the emotions commonly associated with ‘praise and worship’ music) instead of leading the congregation to a proper state of mind for each section of the Mass. Even worse, the dignity of the Mass can be compromised through transformations into non-religious music events or even protestant-style worship sessions, where the focus is drawn away from Christ’s sacrifice at the altar.

But our concern does not stop with the evanescence of sacred music. We have grown up in an ecclesial culture that has, in many quarters, profaned the sacred. We have seen many other abuses in our experiences across different countries and parishes. The conclusion most youth have been lead to is that such occurrences are becoming normal aspects of Catholic worship. While the youth are the ones who are supposed to be benefitting, the general outcome has been closer to the opposite, driving us away from such shallow falsities. These abuses wound us, because we know what the Mass ought to be, because we yearn for the Sacred, and because we desire that the world come to truly know Christ Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Banalising and abusing the Mass makes the faithful feel as if nothing sacred is taking place. It implies the opposite of what the Church believes, establishing a praxis in opposition to the faith. The justification for all of this, though, is that it is “reaching out to the young with things that are familiar to them,” and that these things are what we young people want. But we neither want, nor do we think we need abuses veiled as modern evangelization in order to fully participate in the Liturgy. The belief that the order of prayer needs to more closely resemble the changing norms and practices of the world is as mistaken as the belief that the doctrines of the Faith ought to do the same. The Church is called to not model her behavior on the contemporary world², to be not of this world in the same way that Christ was not of this world but was sent to it as a witness to something greater than this world can offer. We young Catholics have a strong sense of this mission. We hear the call to transform the world rather than conform to it, and we desire to answer that call. We believe that the Church, especially in her Liturgy, ought to represent this opposition to the values of the world and conformity to the splendor of the values of heaven. We therefore ask that the liturgy be transformed to supersede the irreverent disobediences of the world with gestures of reverence and deferential love.

² Cfr. Romans 12:2

We are not blind to the good intentions behind the types of changes made in liturgy. Many responsible for them truly intended to be the vehicle by which young people would be won back to the Church. Despite the good intentions, such methods have, quite simply, not had the desired effect. So many young Catholics have fallen and continue to fall away because they were not spiritually fed. Whether they know it or not, all youth search for beauty, reverence and prayerful stillness which the modern world can not give them. While the Church should have been their sanctuary, it was unable to remain steadfast, and ultimately has become as loud as the world. This can be seen by the huge numbers of youth the Catholic Church loses every year in spite of her ongoing efforts to retain them by making the liturgy “relevant”. So many go through the classes and receive all their sacraments, only to fall prey in high school or college to the desires of the flesh or modern disdain for religion. We desire the beauty of the Church’s traditions, not out of nostalgia for lost beauty, but because we recognize both their inherent value and their strength as tools for catechesis and evangelization. We have unearthed treasures seemingly lost to us for so long, and we deeply desire to share them with the world, especially with fallen away youth.

The Ordinary Form

What is it then that we are asking from the Church? We wish to see greater reverence for the Eucharistic celebration and respect for traditional praxis. We ask for a comprehensive and centrally led reform. We humbly ask that the Church restate the expectation that our prayer fully reflect our beliefs and explain what that means in a modern context.

We humbly ask for clarifications of the teachings on appropriate liturgical music, restating the primacy of Gregorian Chant and Polyphony, with provision for vernacular hymnody and appropriate innovation in liturgical music. We humbly ask that, where modern music is used, it foster the same spirit of awe and contemplation as the aforementioned types, that it inspires reflection on the scriptures and teachings of the Church, and that it accord with the Catechetical ends of the Mass. We ask for less use of music, whether modern or classical, that is unsuitable, either because it is of the wrong type or because it is lyrically vacuous or misleading. And we ask that our local churches foster a culture in which reverent music is encouraged and taught. We earnestly pray that Catholic schools and institutions support the teaching of Plainsong, Gregorian Chant, Polyphony, Hymnody, and modern worship in appropriate settings. Such ideas of proper liturgical music, and more, have already been mentioned and explained in Pope Emeritus Benedict’s Book, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, as well as other writings. These and related writings should be propagated such that the laity may know how to properly use sacred music.

These same concerns can be addressed to other liturgical contentions, but as they can most clearly be seen in the form of music, we have chosen to focus upon it.

Other Forms of The Mass

Many of us, faced with the liberties taken with the Ordinary Form, have found comfort and nourishment in the Extraordinary Form of the Mass. We have found thriving communities of faithful Catholics, young and old, who love the Church and love Her traditions. We have found communities on fire with a missionary zeal, and have been strengthened in our faith as a result. Others have been nourished by the restored English spirituality of the Anglican Use Ordinariates or the mystic Eastern Catholic Divine Liturgy. Unfortunately, these options have not been open to some of us. For many, other liturgical forms are something we can only experience through online videos or with great difficulty in person. Many travel great distances to regularly attend Masses

that answer the burning in their hearts, and many others have been unable to do so. We believe that these liturgies, especially the Extraordinary Form, where it is currently celebrated, are among the most beautiful ways in which the liturgical prayer of the Church can reflect the faith.

We have seen and experienced the flourishing of communities that have adopted the Extraordinary Form as an integral part of their parish life, as well as their considerable success in the retention of young Catholics, the evangelization of their community, and in fostering vocations to priesthood and religious life. We believe that supporting the expansion of these and similarly traditionally minded communities in both the Latin and the Eastern Rites would lead to a great renewal of the Church.

It is with this in mind, recognizing the potential of the Extraordinary Form to encourage great zeal in the hearts of Catholics, even lapsed Catholics, who discovered this form of liturgy, we ask for its wider availability in addition to our request for reform of the Ordinary Form. We ask that the Extraordinary Form be encouraged not merely in response to the request of organized groups of the faithful, but proactively; that more people can come to know and love this form. We ask that the regular celebration of the Extraordinary Form be established even where there is no established group requesting it. We hope that someday every parish offering the Ordinary Form will also offer the Extraordinary Form, not in competition with the former but as a supplement to it for those who desire this ancient and reverent form of the Mass. Allow the faithful to worship in both forms as each allows for worship and praise according different temperament and sensibility. We believe that greater inclusion of the Extraordinary Form in parish life, especially when it can be celebrated in its more solemn forms (the *Missa Cantata* and the *Missa Solemnis*), is one of the chief ways by which our desire for the restoration of the sacred can be achieved. We also ask that other options such as Eastern Rite communities be supported as well, perhaps even with a loosening of the restrictions on switching membership. The Church is filled with many rich liturgical traditions, and it is sad to see so few of these given a place.

We ask these things, not because we dislike or wish to abolish the Ordinary Form, but because we believe there is a deep and meaningful Catholic spirituality from which all can benefit in other forms of the Mass. We believe that the Ordinary Form benefits from the influence of the Extraordinary, that the Extraordinary benefits from the knowledge and understanding of the Mass that familiarity with the Ordinary Form brings, that the entire Latin Rite benefits from the Eastern Rites, and so on. These forms, when they complement one another in this way, are mutually enriched, and in turn enrich our parish and diocesan communities. We submit to the Church's consideration, that discouragement of the Extraordinary Form and other elements of our liturgical richness removes valuable tools from our arsenals, and we humbly ask that they be widely encouraged.

In all things, we, the faithful Catholic youth around the world, simply desire to see in the liturgy that which St. Paul promoted in his work almost 2000 years ago: the good, the pure, the true, and the beautiful.

Section II. Tradition and Devotion

There is a growing desire in the Church as a whole, especially among the young members of the Church, for a return to the genuine traditions of the Church. In the modern world, where controlling ideologies are in a constant state of flux, many are seeking a solid foundation upon which to base their lives; some unchanging standard from which there are no surprises on account of the longevity of its course. Many have been deeply distressed and hurt at various new practices which contradict or replace such traditions. There is something immensely comforting about participating in a ritual that predates oneself, one's parents and grandparents, and indeed, the ideologies that shape the modern world. With these traditions we can reach back into time while remaining present in the current world, and we can reform the world with the practices and mysteries handed down to us from the past. This is a task of utmost importance for the Church. We do not desire some extreme retroactive movement in the Church, taking all of the liturgical life back to some imagined perfection that once was. Rather, we desire fidelity to the liturgical norms put forth by Holy Mother Church, and a greater acceptance and availability for the practices that preceded them.

We, the faithful Catholic youth of the world, feel abandoned to the waywardness of a world whose mantra is unregulated license—a mantra which serves to enslave one to passions rather than liberate the downtrodden—and we desire fidelity to genuine Catholic teaching expressed first and foremost in the “source and summit of the Christian life,” the Holy Eucharist.³ Sadly there is much testimony giving witness to unfortunate and horrendous abuses that have been rendered upon our Lord and Savior in the Blessed Sacrament. Greater instruction on Eucharistic Theology, from the pulpit and in the classroom, is necessary to correct the mistakes and gaps in knowledge of the people of God. Only when we begin to accept, acknowledge, and assimilate this truth into ourselves will we be able to again move forward in the fallen world with Christ as our head.

It is of utmost importance that the Church be a “light [which] shines in the darkness” rather than a receptacle for the failures of the world.⁴ The Church must inform the culture rather than the culture informing the Church. The Holy Catholic Church has survived the threats and persecutions levied against Her by countless societies, emperors, kings, and governments; She has done this through holding fast to the rock upon which she was founded, the pillar of truth given by Christ at Her institution. We must not submit ourselves to the sinfulness of the modern era. The prince of this world, satan, desires nothing more than to have Christ's mystical body bow down to his commands and ingest his wicked lies. We must stand strong against the forces demanding that we change our doctrine and our faith in order to be “relevant” to modern man. Let us keep ever present in our minds Christ' words, spoken to His heavenly Father before His glorious victory over death: “I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”⁵

In the history of humanity, before the advent and wide-spread use of writing and reading, it was necessary to have teachers of the laws and history of a tribe or people for this information to be passed on and perpetuated. For the Jewish people this task was left to the Elders who over

³ Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 11

⁴ Cfr. John 1:5

⁵ John 17:14-16

their lives had had the opportunity to learn their varied and storied traditions.⁶ However, tradition passes on far more than just information; it conveys and transports a part of the past into the present and future. Tradition is like a time-machine that connects people across time while preserving the past, chronicling the present, and enriching the future. It is through this connection that faith is passed, as well as law, custom, and ritual.

Tradition, by and large, is specific to a religion, nation, or ethnicity. As such, tradition is passed from the elders of a particular group to those younger members of the group. This is specifically shown by the different liturgies of the Eastern and Western Catholic Churches. Though all are united by the same creed, the differences in tradition are shown forth by the major differences in liturgy and focus. Each is a full representation of right religion, but all are distinct because of their different origins.

Tradition is a sort of living memory that connects its adherents to the hope of the past while providing a foundation for the future. By resting and by relying upon the foundation that tradition provides we are able to build the future. Without that foundation, anything that one attempts to build will fall into ruin. Even the secular institutions of the world believe in having a meaningful set of ‘traditions’ such as initiation rituals and ways of commemorating certain events, because even the secular world recognizes the power that the past possesses. It holds this power even over those that would rather see the past fade from memory entirely.

What, then, is it that the writers of this document desire? We do not desire a wholesale return to old ways, which some might view as being stuck in the past; rather, we desire a faithful following of what the Church has ordained to be good, wholesome, and right. Right worship acts as a catalyst for the whole of humanity. Catholic practice was developed over thousands of years, organically building upon the ways of the past to meet the people where they were, while at the same time calling them to something higher. We desire a greater emphasis on orthopraxis (right worship) and a general attitude of reverence throughout the universal Church for that most holy of sacraments by which the Bread of Life comes down from heaven. This same love of the Eucharist that has lasted through years of church history must be brought back in a more evident and powerful way.

⁶ Deuteronomy 32:7, Psalms 78:3

Section III. Teaching and Catechesis

The Challenge We Face

We live in a world increasingly hostile to the truth: not merely its fact, but its very existence. In the world where we live man has come to be the measure of all things; what is considered important is no longer objective truth and beauty, but emotion and self-perception. We live in a world opposed to the truth proclaimed by the Catholic Church in favour of a Gospel of relativism. We are natives of this new reality, and have suffered the consequences of the confused teachings of the world. The throwaway, relativist culture we have grown up in proclaims a doctrine of self-centeredness and pride. We have lost notions of service, duty, and selflessness in favor of the exaltation of the individual. Tossed on the waves of this false doctrine, we are in desperate need of a rock to stand and build our lives on.

We, now more than ever, need the Church to proclaim the truth. We need the Church to proclaim it boldly, without apology, and without adulteration or dilution. We need the authenticity of a Church that preaches the truth of the Gospel. We need a Church that embraces new forms of evangelization, while holding fast to her perennial teachings. We need a Church rooted in truth and proclaiming that truth to the world.

The Final Document of the Pre-Synod Meeting addresses the varied crises in Christian teaching, offering, for consideration, two important challenges to the teaching of the Catholic faith. First, it highlights the pervasive despair amongst young people that the Church presents ‘an unreachable standard,’ completely out of touch with the world, and the belief that moral teaching can be abandoned so that young people ‘encounter the mission of Christ, instead of what they may perceive as an impossible moral expectation.’ Second, it highlights the way the institutional Church has lost relevance, that ‘there are many young people who relate to God solely on a personal level, who are “spiritual but not religious”, or focused only on a relationship with Jesus Christ and not any specific religious practices.’

We would add to this a third category: the lack of adequate catechesis and clarity of teaching. Many of us young people were neither catechized nor evangelized in the faith as children, and lack this foundation as adults to be able to grow into a mature understanding of the faith or a deeper love of Jesus Christ.

Neither Catechized nor Evangelized

It is an oft-cited maxim, that young Catholics are sacramentalized, but are often not catechized nor evangelized. Very often in our programs preparing us for Holy Communion and Confirmation (especially as children and young adults) we are not taught adequately *what it is* that we are being prepared for, or what the faith that we are asked to profess is all about. St Paul writes in his letter to the Romans: “How can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them?”⁷ So often this has been our experience, that formation in our parishes has not prepared us adequately; it teaches us neither how to *know* Christ through his Church, nor to *love* him. We have, in short, experienced the failure of the Church to either catechize us (so that we know him), or to evangelize us (so that we love him).

⁷ Romans 10:14

Because many of us have not been sufficiently catechized, we are unable to defend our faith, even to ourselves. We do not know *what* we are being asked by the Church to believe, and because of this are like the seed that is sown on the edge of the path⁸ or the seed sown on the rocks⁹ and do not have the strength or foundation we need to hold fast to our faith when challenged by the world and by those who would draw us to their own communities.

Because we have not been catechized, the work of evangelizing us is hindered before it is begun. We cannot come to love that which we do not know, and because many of us do not know Christ in his Church it is easy for us to fall away, either into unbelief or into the arms of those offering us a different (and deeply flawed) understanding of Christ. We have not been brought to understand what it is Christ asks of us, what is expected of us, and because of this cannot begin to understand what it means to have a relationship with Him. And if we have not been taught to love Christ, how can we lead others to a deep love of Him? Our formation as adult Christians is hampered by these dual failings in our early formation, and we have suffered the consequences. Many young people today who practice the faith and are considered cradle-Catholics are, in reality, reverts to the faith. Many of us have had to teach ourselves the faith in the absence of such teachings from our local church. Other still have found their way back to the faith through youth movements and online evangelization.

We ask the Church to support those communities and movements that produce good fruit in this regard, nurturing vocations and provide much needed catechesis. We ask that these groups be wholeheartedly encouraged. We ask that the Church examine how it is preparing young people for the sacraments and put more effort into evangelization of the young through detailed, comprehensive, and orthodox catechesis in the early stages of life.

Christ the Enabler

One of the greatest difficulties we face within the Church is those of its members who water down its teachings, preferring to provide an encounter with ‘Christ the enabler’ (a false image of Christ who neither challenges nor reprimands, but smilingly accepts our sinfulness) rather than an encounter with the authentic Christ. Young people need and desire the truth. We know that an authentic encounter with Christ is a transformative experience, and it is a disservice to us to present us with a version of Christ who neither challenges nor transforms. Those who wish the Church to alter or water down her moral or social teachings do so with good intentions, but fail to understand what it is we want and need. We desire an encounter with Christ that challenges us, not one in which we are told we do not need to change. We do not want the passive, smiling “Christ the enabler,” who accommodates the sinfulness of the world rather than calling it to greater holiness through love for Him and keeping of his commandments.

We do not desire any watering down nor alterations to the teachings of the Church. We reject utterly the notion that the Church needs to change her teaching to accommodate the world. We desire that the Church fulfil her charism of teaching, preaching the truth boldly, unashamedly, and without redaction even if it means we are rejected by the world. The Church is not a Facebook page trying to get as many likes as possible by being “modern” or “trendy;” it is the teacher of

⁸ “When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart” Matthew 13:19

⁹ Such a person “has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.” Matthew 13:21

truth. The surest way to damage or even destroy the faith of young people is by promulgating a disingenuous or misguided alteration of the truth in a bid for popularity. We desire the Church to be popular, as we desire all to know the love of Christ. However, if the choice is between popularity and authenticity, we choose authenticity.

Unity of Teaching

It is our desire above all for not simply clarity and authenticity, but also for unity. Around the world, especially in the West, our local leadership muddies the waters of the Church's teaching and its implications for our lives. We live in a world that is at war with fundamental aspects of the Church's teachings, especially her moral and social teaching. But we cannot afford to be confused. We reject attempts by local leadership to alter the doctrines of the Church based on a local context; what is true and right in Guinea and Argentina is true and right in Ireland and the Americas. There should be no alteration of the teachings of the Church based in accommodation to local culture. Attempts to modify doctrine so that it changes according to national borders is effectively the disintegration of a universal Church into disconnected national factions.

Conclusion:

As this document closes we once again reiterate our desire to be heard, not as voices raised in chorus against the Church or against the Pre-Synod Meeting or English Language Group, but as faithful sons and daughters, speaking humbly and more fully on these topics which are near and dear to our hearts. We express our abiding gratitude to Our Holy Father and the organizers and participants of the Pre-Synod and Synod Meeting, for without these people we would have no occasion to be heard. We submit this document and its forthcoming sister document once again to the care of our Blessed Mother as we offer it to the scrutiny of the Synod Fathers and the wider Catholic community.