Vatican



Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, relator general of the Synod of Bishops, arrives for a news conference to present an update on the synod process at the Vatican Aug. 26. (CNS/Paul Haring)



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A leading organizer of the Vatican's newly revamped process for the 2021-23 Synod of Bishops says he is not seeking to change the Catholic Church's teaching on gay relationships, but would like to see a change in attitude.

"I am not in favor of changing any doctrine, I am in favor for a church where really everybody can feel welcome," said Luxembourg Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, who is serving as the relator, or chairperson, of the synod. "This welcome does not mean that there cannot be discussion, this welcome does not mean that there cannot be different positions."

Hollerich, a Jesuit who also heads the pan-European Catholic bishops' conference, offered his remarks during an Aug. 26 Vatican press conference, which launched the next stage of Pope Francis' synod on synodality.

In the coming months, regional bishops' conferences from around the globe will gather for meetings at the continental level. They will discuss the findings of hundreds of thousands of listening sessions held throughout the world during the first phase of the synod, in which local dioceses and outside groups held consultations.

In October 2023, bishops and Catholic leaders from around the world will meet in Rome to consider the issues raised — including calls for greater inclusion of women and LGBTQ people in church ministry — in an effort to foster a more participatory church that listens to all voices.

> 'I have a concrete mission by the pope to listen and to serve.'
>
> — Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich
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The Luxembourg cardinal has previously said he considers the church's teaching on gay relationships to be in need of revision.

The current version of the Catholic Catechism describes homosexual acts as "intrinsically disordered," and given Francis' more welcoming stance to LGBTQ persons, some Catholic bishops and theologians have called for a revision of such language.

While Hollerich said on Aug. 26 that he "fully believe[s] in the tradition of the church," he also said he wants to help build a church "where everybody can feel at home."

"If we close the door on people, we push some people into despair and that is something we do not want," he added.

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Hollerich, who has been tapped by Francis to write many of the documents for the synod, said he has no "personal agenda for the synod."

"I have a concrete mission by the pope," he told reporters on August 26, "to listen and to serve."

Earlier in the press conference, Hollerich had also been asked if he anticipated that the synod would result in a "shock" for the global church, such as allowing women to serve as priests. "Our work is not to create a shock for the church, but to listen to what the People of God are saying," he said.

Also speaking at the event were Maltese Cardinal Mario Grech, the head of the Vatican's office for the Synod of Bishops; Grech's two undersecretaries: French Xavierian Sr. Natalie Becquart and Spanish Bishop Luis Marin de San Martin; and Italian Jesuit Fr. Giacomo Costa and Australian Susan Pascoe, both of whom are consultors to the office.

Grech said the synod process so far had shown a church that is "alive, in need of authenticity and healing... [and] learning to walk and discern together."

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