

African Catholics prepare for synod

Dennis Coday | Sep. 11, 2009 NCR Today

Fr. Pete Henriot, an American Jesuit, is the director of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Lusaka, Zambia. He has an [opinion piece on AllAfrica.com](#) [1] about the upcoming synod of African bishops. It is the second such synod, the last one being convened in 1994.

Henriot writes that after reading the *instrumentum laboris*, the working document the bishops will use to prepare for the synod, he was

" ... struck by the relevance of the agenda topics to the life of the church in Africa. There is an honest reflection on the difficulties of implementation of the First African Synod (1994), with clear recognition that many parts of Africa have in the past decade been severely wracked by armed conflicts and ineffective governance. The concrete experience of the church in relating to this challenging situation is sketched with obvious questions regarding the effectiveness of our responses."

Of all the points that the synod could emphasize, Henriot points to three that he sees are critical. To points are included in the *instrumentum laboris*.

- Educate Catholics, especially those in important government and business positions, in Catholic social teaching.
- Promote the dignity of women in both church and society.
- Advocate for environmentalism (He notes particularly climate change, ecological integrity, life-style adjustments, and industrial pollution).

The *instrumentum laboris* mentions the third point only in passing, Henriot writes, but "surely the actual synod deliberations will take up the topic."

The synod will meet in Rome for most of October and NCR's John Allen plans to be there. Check this blog and Web site for updates.

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[1] <http://allafrica.com/stories/200909110890.html>