

Protests against 'Roman imperialism' at Middle East synod

John L. Allen Jr. | Oct. 12, 2010



Melkite Patriarch Gregoire III Laham of Damascus, Syria, carries a crucifix as he arrives for the Opening Mass of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Oct. 10. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

ROME -- While the Christians of the Middle East face a staggering variety of external challenges, from the Israeli/Palestinian problem to the rise of radical Islam, it was internal ecclesiastical questions which actually loomed largest during day two of the Oct. 10-24 Synod of Bishops for the Middle East.

Concretely, several representatives of the Eastern Churches of the region registered strong protests against what they almost seem to regard as a sort of 'Roman imperialism' inside global Catholicism. Their basic argument is that reforms are required if the identity, authority and heritage of the 22 Eastern Churches in communion with Rome are to be preserved.

Whether any of those ideas actually survives in the propositions which the Synod of Bishops will eventually deliver to the pope remains to be seen, but collectively they suggest a fairly widespread frustration with what leaders of the Eastern Churches sometimes perceive as a sort of second-class citizenship within Catholicism.

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