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### **Pope's statements on priestly formation and clericalism resonate with AUSCP positions**

Holy Cross Father Stephen P. Newton, executive director of the Association of US Catholic Priests, noted that Pope Francis' rare synodal intervention resonates well with the AUSCP 2018 recommendations for changes in priestly formation. Published reports say the pope referred to clericalism as a "scourge," and the Synod Report said that formation for ordination must be accomplished in connection with the whole Church.

In its 2018 White Papers on Priestly Formation and Clericalism, AUSCP recommended significant changes in formation programs to combat clericalism and prepare future priests for real-life ministry with lay men and women.

In his intervention, the pope said that a critical concept in forming a more "synodal church" is having those ordained listen to all the faithful and join them in taking responsibility for the fundamental Christian mission. According to a Catholic News Service report, Pope Francis said that does not mean doing away with the Catholic Church's hierarchical structure or denying the specific gifts and responsibilities of the Church's ordained ministers but working together as brothers and sisters, albeit with distinct roles.

According to CNS, the pope indicated that some synod participants -- more than 75% of whom are bishops -- had qualms about giving non-bishops a vote in the synod deliberations and, perhaps, about putting too much emphasis on the hopes and fears lay Catholics voiced during the synod's preparatory phase.

Newton noted the similarities between the AUSCP 2018 documents and the Synod Report, both warning against clericalism as a "distortion of the priestly vocation" that "needs to be challenged from the earliest stages of formation" by ensuring "close contact" with people, especially those in need (11 c). The reports also say that seminaries and other courses of formation of candidates for the ministry should connect with the daily life of communities (11 e).

Looking ahead to the next synodal session in 2024, Newton said AUSCP will continue to encourage bishops to listen to the ministering church, and to examine preparation methods toward ordination.

See "Five Overriding Concerns" About Priestly Formation: <https://auscp.org/five-overriding-concerns/>

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