

BOOK REVIEWS

Ignace BERTEN, *Les divorcés remariés peuvent-ils communier? Enjeux ecclésiaux des débats autour du Synode sur la famille et d'Amoris laetitia (La Part-Dieu)*, Namur, Lessius, 2017, 365 pp.

The work of I. Berten, in nine chapters, the question of the access of divorces remarried to the Eucharistic communion in the Catholic Church, the question which is very sensitive a large part of the faithful. In this context, it deals on the one hand with the relationship between doctrine and pastoral care and on the other with the status of the ordinary teaching of the Magisterium, which in some respects has been infallible in recent years. Admittedly, for the author, this question of access to divorces remarried to communion is emblematic. However, it serves him as a key reading and interpretation of the dynamics of the Synod on the family held in October 2014 and 2015 (p. 15).

The first eight chapters are devoted to the analysis of the Synod event, its announcement, and its preparation and conclusion in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, as well as its reception. There are two antagonistic positions on the discipline of access to divorces remarried from communion. The first position prone an opening and a relaxation of the current discipline of the Church, without calling into question the doctrine of the indissolubility of the marriage bond; the second defends the *status quo*, arguing that touching the discipline in force on marriage would be tantamount to also touching the doctrine in this area which is, according to her, definitive. Although it is not the only one, since there are others such as the ministries, homosexuality, etc equally important for the mission of the Church today, this question of access divorces remarried to communion "have an emblematic character" (p. 328). Solving it will treat others.

The ninth and final chapter is entitled: "Le Synode et "Amoris laetitia" Perspectives et questions théologiques". It constitutes a theological

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reflection on the question of the access of the divorces remarried to the communion and highlights its state. If it is true that the Synod on the family can be considered from the point of view of the pastoral event and that of the ecclesial event, one must be able to discern its concrete fruits on the multiplicity of local lands (p. 301), says the author. According to him, this Synod must be able to open up perspectives and questions about how the Church is called to think and act in society, how it works and how it relates to the culture (p. 301). Three problems are used by I. Berten to lead this reflection: the relationship between Magisterium and ethics with regard to the question of divorces remarried; the relationship between pastoral care, doctrine and theology when one considers the point of view of mercy; and finally how to think about unity and diversity within the Church as regards the path of identical discernment by *Amoris laetitia* (p. 304-305).

The analysis, interpretation and proposals of I. Berten in this book is based on a meticulous and rigorous study of an immense body of texts, composed of the Final Report, of *Amoris laetitia*, interviews, journalistic writings, speeches about the announcement, the preparation, running and reception of the Synod on the family. This *corpus* is so important that it may sometimes seem to make reading the book difficult, although one appreciates its scientific utility and its necessity in the demonstration of the author's thesis.

Beyond this observation, the author, with finesse and rigor, perspicacity and courage, highlighted the theological and ecclesial issues of the debates around the Synod on the family and apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*. This work is more than useful to theologians, canonists, pastors and all those who are concerned about a Church that knows how to open up while remaining faithful to its doctrine and mission.

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