

Sounding An Alarm: Second European Synod To Tackle Church Decline

By John Thavis

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- When European bishops met at the Vatican in a synod in 1991, they celebrated the fall of communism in the Soviet bloc and the resulting opportunities for church expansion and cooperation.

The continent's bishops are coming back to the Vatican for another synod Oct. 1-23, but this time their speeches may be less optimistic: By many measures, the church has lost ground in Europe during the 1990s.

In real numbers, church membership throughout Europe has declined by more than 4 million people

since 1989, the year the Berlin Wall came down. Overall, there are 5 percent fewer priests and 15 percent fewer nuns. Seminarian numbers have also dropped, even in places like Poland, where 18 percent fewer men are studying for the priesthood.

If the bishops rang the bells of freedom in 1991, they are ringing the alarm bells in 1999, trying to figure out what went wrong.

?GOODNESS GRACIOUS?

?DON'T THEY KNOW

WHAT WENT WRONG??

1. Tomorrow, October 4, 1999 is the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi.
2. Thursday, October 7, 1999 is the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary.
3. October is the Month of the Holy Rosary. This is a MUST devotion. The Rosary should be said every day is possible. As always, the Rosary will be recited each evening at 7:10 P.M. at the Abbey during the month of October.
4. Please pray for all the Sick and Shut-Ins of our Chapels, especially remembering Al Sachs and Frank Nash and the many victims of the various calamities worldwide.
5. **MASSES FOR THE WEEK: (Abbot Leonard's Schedule Only)**

SUNDAY:	For the People of the Chapels
MONDAY:	Special Int. Jerry and Barbara Mead
TUESDAY:	Dec. Frank & Katherine Riga
WEDNESDAY:	Special Int. Sister Mary Laurene, O.P.
THURSDAY:	Special Int. Mary Johnson
FRIDAY:	Dec. Lillian Graveman
SATURDAY:	Dec. Father Michael Morgan, O.S.B. IV



*"We sit by and watch the barbarian,
we tolerate him; in the long stretches
of peace we are not afraid. We are
tickled by his irreverence; his cosmic
inversion of our old certitudes and our
fixed creeds refreshes us; we laugh!
But as we laugh we are watched by
large and awful faces from beyond;
and on those faces there is no smile!!"*

