

# Prominent French Catholics issue call for Church reform

Michel Camdessus, former Vatican policymaker and IMF director, is editor of new e-book calling for a change in Catholicism according to the vision of Pope Francis

[Mélinée Le Priol](#) and [\(with Robert Mickens in Rome\)](#)

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Michel Camdessus, former IMF Managing Director. (Photo by JIM WATSON/AFP)

A group of 11 prominent lay Catholics in France, led by a former policymaker at the Vatican, have issued a new manifesto for change in the Church.

[Transformer l'Église catholique](#) ("Changing the Catholic Church") is the title of their new 56-page e-book.

It seeks to answer the fundamental question: "What kind of Church would we like to see emerge from the 'great trial' we are going through?"

And as the subtitle points out, the book offers "some proposals collected by Michel Camdessus, former member of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace".

Camdessus, 87, is an internationally known economist who served as managing director of the International Monetary Fund from 1987-2000, the longest tenure in IMF history.

But he also has had first-hand experience of the workings of the Vatican. In 2000 John Paul II made him one of only a handful of laypersons who were a full member of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Camdessus served in that policy-making capacity until 2017 when Pope Francis suppressed the pontifical council and created the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

In fact, the former economist decided to launch the e-book project as a response to the Jesuit pope's invitation in 2018 to "change the Catholic Church", as put forth in the [Letter to the People of God](#).

Camdessus and the other ten laypersons who have contributed to the e-book say they are merely offering reflections as "committed Christians".

But the work, which is divided into three chapters, has been bolstered by the assistance of Father Hervè Legrand, an internationally renowned ecumenist and ecclesialogist.

The 84-year-old Dominican theologian has added a number of historical and theological appendices that strengthen the book's proposals for ecclesial reform.

### **From clericalism to synodality**

The book presents the situation as critical, to say the least.

The authors express deep concern over clericalism (including its revival among younger priests) and the persistence of a "narrow" sexual morality many of our contemporaries have simply ignored.

They also say moves toward advancing synodality and lay participation in Church governance are still too timid.

Although the sexual abuse crisis is what triggered these French Catholics to speak out, it is not at the heart of what they are saying.

Solidly argued through numerous references to ecclesiastical history and magisterial texts, they make a widespread plea for changes in ecclesial structures. They invite all members of the Church -- lay and ordained alike -- to face all the related issues head-on.

The authors point out that, formerly, these issues were "widely debated in the media, that is to say outside the Church and in a manner that is too rapid", because they could not be debated inside the Church.

But they note discussions on these topics have become more a part of ordinary ecclesial life, especially since the pope issued his *Letter to the People of God*.

### **New family models**

It is precisely behind Pope Francis that the authors of this text invite Christians to commit themselves, by more actively supporting his structural reforms and by supporting his vision for the future - whether it is a question of collegiality, welcoming the divorced and remarried or helping the official language of the Church to evolve.

They express frustration, though not in a judgmental way, with Catholics who seem nostalgic for the past. Such Catholics, they say, are insensitive to societal changes, especially to new family models in particular).

Quite logically, the authors of the text support the proposals from the [Amazon Synod](#). These include a call for the ordination of married men and "pre-marital blessing, following discernment" for young people living as couples.

Camdessus and his fellow Catholic authors dream of a Church "entirely nourished by the Gospel and the Eucharist, at the service of the world to come".

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