

## **Cardinals based in Rome showed ‘lack of awareness’ of what life is really like over homosexuality and divorce**

Cardinals blocking Pope Francis move on gay and divorced Catholics 'unaware' of real life – Bishop

Cardinals based in Rome showed ‘lack of awareness’ of what life is really like over homosexuality and divorce, says Anglican delegate at the Catholic Synod of Bishops



Cardinals closeted in the Vatican are holding out against Pope Francis’s drive to make the Roman Catholic Church more welcoming to gay people and divorcees because of a “lack of awareness” of real life, a leading Anglican bishop has suggested.

The Bishop of Durham, the Rt Rev Paul Butler, one of a handful of non-Roman Catholics invited to take part in a global gathering of bishops in Rome to discuss family issues, said he was “excited and intrigued” by much of what he saw.

But he said he left with the impression that while clergy around the world are reaching out beyond their traditional audiences with a “more thoughtful and open” approach, Cardinals ensconced in Rome appeared more concerned about doctrinal purity.

Pope Francis suffered an apparent setback in his efforts to make the Catholic Church more welcoming to those traditionally viewed as “sinners” last week, when a specially-convened synod failed to approve parts of a key declaration signalling a change a new tone.

The document had already been significantly watered down from an initial draft which spoke of the need to “respect, welcome and value” people in same-sex relationships.

It also appeared to play down suggestions that the ban on remarried divorcees receiving Holy Communion could be relaxed.

Writing in *The Catholic Herald*, Bishop Butler said that he had been “humbled” by the example of Pope Francis in listening to all sides and guiding the Church through the process.

But he added: “I could not help but notice the passion and compassion of local bishops calling for more thoughtful and open pastoral care for all in need, whatever their marital and sexual orientation.

“They were not asking to change the Church’s teaching on the indissolubility of marriage, but they were seeking fresh ways of accompanying people in their need.

“The Rome-based Cardinals seemed more concerned to ensure the doctrine is maintained.

“There seemed a lack of awareness of what it is really like in the parishes in remote villages and mega-cities.”

Bishop Butler, who took part in small-group discussions alongside Catholic delegates, added: “It is of course not as simple as that, but it is an overall impression – one shared by all the fraternal delegates and, I have to say, accepted by all the members of the small group when I shared it with them.”

John Bingham - *The Telegraph*