

CATHOLIC VANCOUVER MAY 02, 2022

# Abbot Braganza resigns from Westminster Abbey

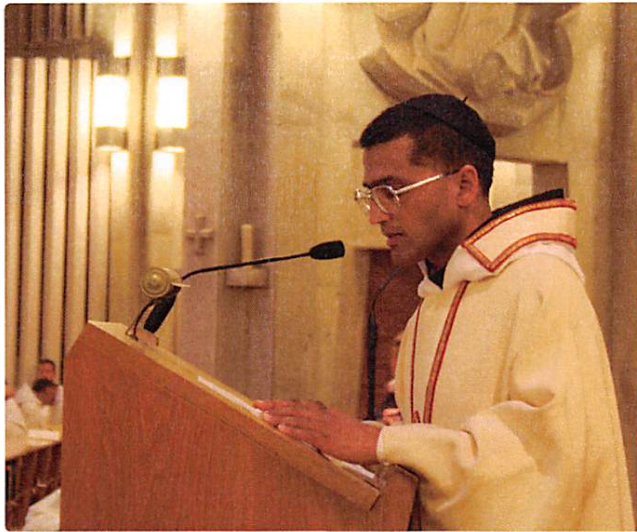
BY [B.C. CATHOLIC STAFF](#)

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A new abbot for Westminster Abbey will be chosen in July following the resignation May 3 of Abbot John Braganza. (B.C. Catholic files)

Abbot John Braganza, OSB, of Westminster Abbey in Mission has announced his resignation effective May 3.

The decision was made after months of personal and community discernment, the abbey said in a statement today.



Abbot John Braganza of Westminster Abbey. (B.C. Catholic files)

Abbot Braganza served as abbot for 16 years.

The statement from the abbey said the abbot was responsible for “many accomplishments with regard to the life of the monastery and the Seminary of Christ the King,” which the abbey is responsible for.

“At this time, however, it has become evident that there is need for change and renewal, for both Abbot John and for the community.”

The statement said “concerns have arisen regarding his interpersonal relations,” but that there are no allegations of sexual misconduct or of any misconduct with minors.

Father Benedict Lefebvre, OSB, Prior of the community, will be the temporary administrator of the abbey.

The monastic chapter will meet July 11 of this year for an abbatial election.

The said Abbot Braganza would be away “for a suitable period of time” and requested prayers for him and the community during the transition.

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Archbishop James Carney (l.) presents cheque from the recent archdiocesan collection for the Seminary of Christ the King's new gym to Fr. Augustine Kalberer, OSB, Rector of the Seminary.

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WORLD APRIL 15, 2022

# Archbishop Miller signs letter warning that Germany's 'Synodal Path' could lead to schism

BY CNA STAFF

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Archbishop Miller at Thursday's Chrism Mass at Holy Rosary Cathedral. The archbishop has joined more than 80 bishops around the world in signing a "fraternal open letter" to Germany's bishops warning that sweeping changes to Church teaching in Germany may lead to schism.

(Holy Rosary Cathedral Facebook)

[WORLD](#) APRIL 15, 2022

# Archbishop Miller signs letter warning that Germany’s ‘Synodal Path’ could lead to schism

BY [CNA STAFF](#)



Archbishop Miller at Thursday’s Chrism Mass at Holy Rosary Cathedral. The archbishop has joined more than 80 bishops around the world in signing a “fraternal open letter” to Germany’s bishops warning that sweeping changes to Church teaching in Germany may lead to schism. (Holy Rosary Cathedral Facebook)

*This story was updated April 19 with the current number of letter signatories and new comment from Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg, president of the German bishops’ conference, and Cardinal Kurt Koch.*

Vancouver Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, and Prince George Bishop Stephen Jensen are among more than 80 bishops from around the world who have released a “fraternal open letter” to Germany’s bishops warning that sweeping changes to Church teaching advocated by the ongoing process known as the “Synodal Path” may lead to schism.

Archbishop Emeritus Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa-Cornwall and Bishop Paul Terrio of St. Paul, Alta., are the other Canadian bishops to have signed the letter, which was released Tuesday.

The letter expresses “our growing concern about the nature of the entire German ‘Synodal Path,’ “which the signatories say has led to confusion about Church teaching and appears focused more on man’s will than God’s.

“Failing to listen to the Holy Spirit and the Gospel, the Synodal Path’s actions undermine the credibility of Church authority, including that of Pope Francis; Christian anthropology and sexual morality; and the reliability of Scripture,” the letter states.

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MORE OF THE LATEST



“Synodal Way” flags fly in front of the Congress Center Messe Frankfurt in Germany. (Max von Lachner / Synodal Way)

“While they display a patina of religious ideas and vocabulary, the German Synodal Path documents seem largely inspired not by Scripture and Tradition – which, for the Second Vatican Council, are ‘a single sacred deposit of the Word of God’ – but by sociological analysis and contemporary political, including gender, ideologies,” the letter continues.

“They look at the Church and her mission through the lens of the world rather than through the lens of the truths revealed in Scripture and the Church’s authoritative Tradition.”

The letter’s initial signatories included 49 bishops from the United States. Another 19 are from Africa, 14 of whom are from Tanzania. The letter’s organizers provided an email address – [episcopimundi2022@gmail.com](mailto:episcopimundi2022@gmail.com) – that other bishops can use to add their names to the document.

Those lending their names to the document include such well-known prelates as Cardinal Raymond Burke, Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, and Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver.

Aquila released his own [15-page commentary](#) in May on the Synodal Path’s first text, saying it puts forward “untenable” proposals for changes to Church teaching. “The German bishops are sowing confusion for the entire Church and this should worry every bishop,” he said in a statement regarding the bishops’ letter.



Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of the German bishops’ conference, celebrates Mass during the third Synodal Assembly in Frankfurt Feb. 4, 2021. (CNS photo/Julia Steinbrecht, KNA)

Another prelate who signed the letter, Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois, released the following statement: “The German Synodal Way has strayed far from the path of authentic synodality and has placed itself in opposition to the truths of our Catholic faith as taught over the centuries from Scripture and Tradition. In fraternal correction and in union with bishops from around the world, I encourage the Bishops of Germany to return to the true deposit of faith as handed on to us by Jesus Christ.”



The [president of Poland's Catholic bishops' conference](#) and the Nordic bishops have expressed similar concerns. The latter group [issued an open letter cautioning against what it called a "capitulation to the Zeitgeist"](#) and an "impoverishment of the content of our faith."

The Synodal Way is a controversial multi-year process bringing together Germany's bishops and laypeople to discuss the way power is exercised in the Church, sexual morality, the priesthood, and the role of women.

The Synodal Assembly consists of the bishops, 69 members of the powerful lay Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK), and representatives of other parts of the German Church.

In February, the assembly [voted in favor of draft texts calling for same-sex blessings](#) and changes to the Catechism of the Catholic Church on homosexuality.

More recently, in an interview published on March 31, German [Cardinal Reinhard Marx asserted that the Catechism's teaching on homosexuality is "not set in stone"](#) and "one is also allowed to doubt what it says."

The 859-word letter doesn't cite any specific changes to Church teaching called for so far.

Instead, it broadly criticizes the Synodal Path's approach and the content of its draft documents. "A telling flaw" about these texts, the letter argues, is that rather than expressing the "joy of the Gospel," they bear the "obsessively critical, and inward-looking" marks of a bureaucratic process chiefly focused on something other than the salvation of souls.

"In its effect," the letter observes, "the Synodal Path displays more submission and obedience to the world and ideologies than to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."

Thomas Sternberg and Bishop Georg Bätzing at the Synodal Way's second Synodal Assembly in Frankfurt, Germany, Sept. 30, 2021. Synodaler Weg/Maximilian von Lachner.

Noting that authentic freedom is not the same as "autonomy," and that one's conscience does not determine truth, the letter argues that the the Synodal Path has veered from the reality that a "properly formed Christian conscience remains subject to the truth about human nature and the norms of righteous living revealed by God and taught by Christ's Church."

The letter states, "Jesus is the truth, who sets us free (Jn 9)."

In the same vein, regarding questions about the governance of the institutional Church, the letter urges the German bishops to remember that "[t]he reform of structures is not at all the same thing as the conversion of hearts."

While acknowledging that the "impulse" to reform and renew the Church "is admirable and should never be feared," the letter notes that "Christian history is littered with well-intended efforts that lost their grounding in the Word of God, in a faithful encounter with Jesus Christ, in a true listening to the Holy Spirit, and in the submission of our wills to the will of the Father."

"Because they failed to heed the words of Jesus, 'Apart from me you can do nothing' (Jn 15: 5), they were fruitless and damaged both the unity and the evangelical vitality of the Church," the letter says.

"Germany's Synodal Path risks leading to precisely such a dead end."

A top cardinal at the Vatican has confirmed Pope Francis' apprehension about Germany's "Synodal Path," telling EWTN in an exclusive interview that critics have raised "legitimate concerns" about the controversial re-assessment of Church teaching on sexual morality and other critical issues.

"I very much hope that the German bishops will not simply defend themselves but really enter into a dialogue. Because there are legitimate concerns behind this that have to be taken seriously," Cardinal Kurt Koch said Thursday.

Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg, president of the German bishops' conference, responded Thursday to a letter warning the country's synodal path could lead to schism by defending the process as a response to abuses in the Church.

The Synodal Path is our attempt in Germany to confront the systemic causes of the abuse and its cover-up that has caused untold suffering to so many people in and through the Church,” Bishop Bätzing wrote April 14 to Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver. [The German bishop’s letter](#) was published April 16 at the German bishops’ conference website.

#### Full text of the letter

A FRATERNAL OPEN LETTER TO OUR BROTHER BISHOPS IN GERMANY

April 11, 2022

In an age of rapid global communication, events in one nation inevitably impact ecclesial life elsewhere. Thus the “Synodal Path” process, as currently pursued by Catholics in Germany, has implications for the Church worldwide. This includes the local Churches which we pastor and the many faithful Catholics for whom we are responsible.

In that light, events in Germany compel us to express our growing concern about the nature of the entire German “Synodal Path” process and the content of its various documents. Our comments here are deliberately brief. They warrant, and we strongly encourage, more elaboration (as, for example, Archbishop Samuel Aquila’s An Open Letter to the Catholic Bishops of the World) from individual bishops. Nonetheless, the urgency of our joint remarks is rooted in Romans 12, and especially Paul’s caution: Do not be conformed to this world. And their seriousness flows from the confusion that the Synodal Path has already caused and continues to cause, and the potential for schism in the life of the Church that will inevitably result.

The need for reform and renewal is as old as the Church herself. At its root, this impulse is admirable and should never be feared. Many of those involved in the Synodal Path process are doubtless people of outstanding character. Yet Christian history is littered with well-intended efforts that lost their grounding in the Word of God, in a faithful encounter with Jesus Christ, in a true listening to the Holy Spirit, and in the submission of our wills to the will of the Father. These failed efforts ignored the unity, experience, and accumulated wisdom of the Gospel and the Church. Because they failed to heed the words of Jesus, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15: 5), they were fruitless and damaged both the unity and the evangelical vitality of the Church. Germany’s Synodal Path risks leading to precisely such a dead end.

As your brother bishops, our concerns include but are not limited to the following:

1. Failing to listen to the Holy Spirit and the Gospel, the Synodal Path’s actions undermine the credibility of Church authority, including that of Pope Francis; Christian anthropology and sexual morality; and the reliability of Scripture.
2. While they display a patina of religious ideas and vocabulary, the German Synodal Path documents seem largely inspired not by Scripture and Tradition – which, for the Second Vatican Council, are “a single sacred deposit of the Word of God” – but by sociological analysis and contemporary political, including gender, ideologies. They look at the Church and her mission through the lens of the world rather than through the lens of the truths revealed in Scripture and the Church’s authoritative Tradition.
3. Synodal Path content also seems to reinterpret, and thus diminish, the meaning of Christian freedom. For the Christian, freedom is the knowledge, the willingness, and the unhampered ability to do what is right. Freedom is not “autonomy.” Authentic freedom, as the Church teaches, is tethered to truth and ordered to goodness and, ultimately, beatitude. Conscience does not create truth, nor is conscience a matter of personal preference or self-assertion. A properly formed Christian conscience remains subject to the truth about human nature and the norms of righteous living revealed by God and taught by Christ’s Church. Jesus is the truth, who sets us free (Jn 8).
4. The joy of the Gospel – essential to Christian life, as Pope Francis so often stresses – seems utterly absent from Synodal Path discussions and texts, a telling flaw for an effort that seeks personal and ecclesial renewal.
5. The Synodal Path process, at nearly every step, is the work of experts and committees: bureaucracy-heavy, obsessively critical, and inward-looking. It thus itself reflects a widespread form of Church sclerosis and, ironically, becomes anti-evangelical in tone. In its effect, the Synodal Path displays more submission and obedience to the world and ideologies than to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

6. The Synodal Path's focus on "power" in the Church suggests a spirit fundamentally at odds with the real nature of Christian life. Ultimately the Church is not merely an "institution" but an organic community; not egalitarian but familial, complementary, and hierarchical – a people sealed together by love of Jesus Christ and love for each other in his name. The reform of structures is not at all the same thing as the conversion of hearts. The encounter with Jesus, as seen in the Gospel and in the lives of the saints throughout history, changes hearts and minds, brings healing, turns one away from a life of sin and unhappiness, and demonstrates the power of the Gospel.

7. The last and most distressingly immediate problem with Germany's Synodal Path is terribly ironic. By its destructive example, it may lead some bishops, and will lead many otherwise faithful laypeople, to distrust the very idea of "synodality," thus further impeding the Church's necessary conversation about fulfilling the mission of converting and sanctifying the world.

In a time of confusion, the last thing our community of faith needs is more of the same. As you discern the Lord's will for the Church in Germany, be assured of our prayers for you.

Cardinal Francis Arinze (Onitsha, Nigeria)

Cardinal Raymond Burke (archbishop emeritus of St. Louis, Missouri, USA)

Cardinal Wilfred Napier (archbishop emeritus of Durban, South Africa)

Cardinal George Pell (archbishop emeritus of Sydney, Australia)

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Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone (San Francisco, California, USA)

Archbishop Damian Dallu (Songea, Tanzania)

Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Kurtz (Louisville, Kentucky, USA)

Archbishop J. Michael Miller (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)

Archbishop Joseph Naumann (Kansas City, Kansas, USA)

Archbishop Andrew Nkea (Bamenda, Cameroon)

Archbishop Renatus Nkwande (Mwanza, Tanzania)

Archbishop Gervas Nyaisonga (Mbeya, Tanzania)

Archbishop Gabriel Palmer-Buckle (Cape Coast, Ghana)

Archbishop Emeritus Terrence Prendergast (Ottawa-Cornwall, Ontario, Canada)

Archbishop Jude Thaddaeus Ruwaichi (Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania)

Archbishop Alexander Sample (Portland, Oregon, USA)

Bishop Joseph Afrifah-Agyekum (Koforidua, Ghana)

Bishop Michael Barber (Oakland, California, USA)

Bishop Emeritus Herbert Bevard (St. Thomas, American Virgin Islands)

Bishop Earl Boyea (Lansing, Michigan, USA)

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Bishop William Callahan (La Crosse, Wisconsin, USA)

Bishop Emeritus Massimo Camisasca (Reggio Emilia-Guastalla, Italy)

Bishop Liam Cary (Baker, Oregon, USA)

Bishop Peter Christensen (Boise, Idaho, USA)

Bishop Joseph Coffey (Auxiliary, Military Services, USA)

Bishop James Conley (Lincoln, Nebraska, USA)

Bishop Thomas Daly (Spokane, Washington, USA)

Bishop John Doerfler (Marquette, Michigan, USA)

Bishop Timothy Freyer (Auxiliary, Orange, California, USA)

Bishop Donald Hying (Madison, Wisconsin, USA)

Bishop Emeritus Daniel Jenky (Peoria, Illinois, USA)

Bishop Stephen Jensen (Prince George, British Columbia, Canada)

Bishop William Joensen (Des Moines, Iowa, USA)

Bishop James Johnston (Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri, USA)

Bishop David Kagan (Bismarck, North Dakota, USA)

Bishop Flavian Kassala (Geita, Tanzania)

Bishop Carl Kemme (Wichita, Kansas, USA)

Bishop Rogatus Kimaryo (Same, Tanzania)

Bishop Anthony Lagwen (Mbulu, Tanzania)

Bishop David Malloy (Rockford, Illinois, USA)

Bishop Gregory Mansour (Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, New York, USA)

Bishop Simon Masedole (Bunda, Tanzania)

Bishop Robert McManus (Worcester, Massachusetts, USA)

Bishop Bernadin Mfumbusa (Kondoa, Tanzania)

Bishop Filbert Mhasi (Tunduru-Masasi, Tanzania)

Bishop Lazarus Msimbe (Morogoro, Tanzania)

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## New abbot in Mission marked by the cross

BY [JUDITH L. WATT](#)

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Father Abbot Alban Riley following his abbatial blessing Thursday, followed by Father Gary Franken and Archbishop J. Michael Miller. (Sammy Tong photos)

On the afternoon of the Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross, the Right Reverend Alban Riley, OSB, became the fourth abbot of Westminster Abbey, and he paid tribute to his own upcoming cross in his closing remarks.

“I would like to thank Our Lord Jesus ...,” said the new abbot, pausing slightly before continuing, “for giving me this cross.”

As the entire congregation chuckled, Abbot Riley continued by thanking his Benedictine community “... for also giving me this cross, as well as helping me greatly to bear it.”

Again, the congregation’s liturgical response was to chuckle. There is fresh air blowing in the abbey and it includes laughter.

The abbey church was filled by the monastic community and major seminarians in the east section, the minor seminarians, religious sisters, and Oblates in the north, the clergy in the south, and more Oblates, friends, and relatives of Father Riley and interested Catholics in the west.



Abbot Alban Riley lies prostrate during the abbatial blessing at Westminster Abbey.

The rare event of the abbatial blessing made an impression on the congregation, particularly some of the younger guests.

Chiara Yong, a Grade 4 student at St. Andrew's Elementary in Vancouver, said it was hard to see from where she was seated at the back of the church, but she was particularly moved when Vancouver Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, elevated the host at the consecration and when she received Communion from the new abbot.

After one week in the minor seminary, Dominic Lefebvre said that what struck him was the large number of priests who had come to witness the event and show their support. "As a priest you know you have all these brothers," he said.

The organist at the abbey, Father Caesarius, had composed a special motet, a vocal musical piece, for the occasion. He asked for the permission of the new abbot who then chose the text.

Abbot Riley was elected abbot July 11 following the resignation of Abbot John Braganza, who had served for sixteen years and resigned in May.

The abbot serves as spiritual head and father of the 32 men living the Benedictine monastic way of life at Westminster Abbey. He is also chancellor of the Seminary of Christ the King, the abbey's main apostolate.

Abbot Alban was born in 1956 in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, the eldest of three children of Anthony Riley and Maria Walter.

In 1962 he and his family immigrated to Canada, settling in Kingston, Ont., where he completed his elementary and secondary education in Catholic schools and went on to Queens University, graduating with a major in history.

He arrived at Westminster Abbey as a postulant in 1979, completed his novitiate, and made first profession of vows in 1981, taking the name and patronage of St. Alban Roe, an English Benedictine martyr of the sixteenth century. He made solemn vows in 1984 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1985.

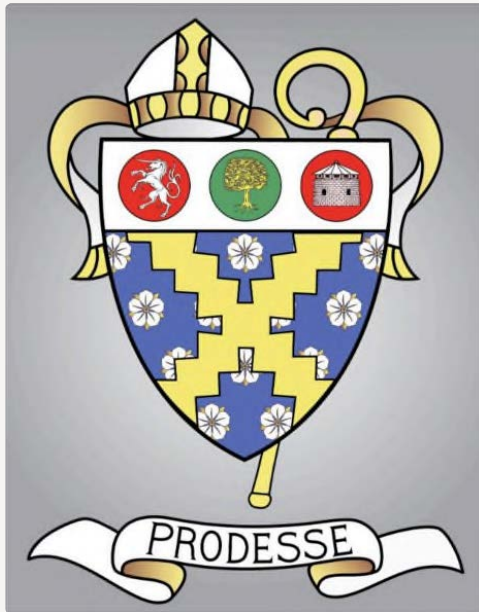
During his time in monastic life, Abbot Alban has been assigned to vocation work and has been



He served as vice-rector of the major seminary and as subprior of the monastic community since 2006. In addition to his bachelor's degree he obtained a licentiate in sacred theology from the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm in Rome.

Gifted with languages, Abbot Alban also enjoys Elvish, not to mention he reads Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* almost yearly.

### Heraldic description and explanation of Abbot Alban's coat of arms



*Azure semy of fraises:* the white strawberry flowers on blue from the Fraser arms, to recall the Fraser Valley where the Westminster Abbey is situated.

*A saltire indented or:* the x-shaped cross gold on blue from the arms of St Alban's Abbey, England, the remains of which were important in the life of St. Alban Roe, Abbot Alban's patron; the indentation recalls the zig-zag walls of Westminster Abbey Church.

*On a chief argent, a roundel vert (charged with an oak tree or) between dexter a roundel gules (charged with a unicorn rampant argent) and sinister a roundel gules (charged with a Martello tower argent):* three roundels give Abbot Alban's personal origins: the white unicorn on red (arms of Schwäbisch Gmünd, the town where he was born); the gold oak tree on green from the arms of Nottinghamshire, where his father came from; the white Martello tower on red from the arms of Kingston, Ont., where he grew up.

As his motto, Abbot Alban chose "*Prodesse*," as found in Chapter 64 of the Rule of St. Benedict: "*Sciatque sibi oportere prodesse magis quam praeesse.*" (And let him know that it beseems him more to profit his brethren than to preside over them).



[CATHOLIC VANCOUVER](#)

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Archdiocese  
of Vancouver



September 7-8, 2024  
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Indigenous and non-Indigenous  
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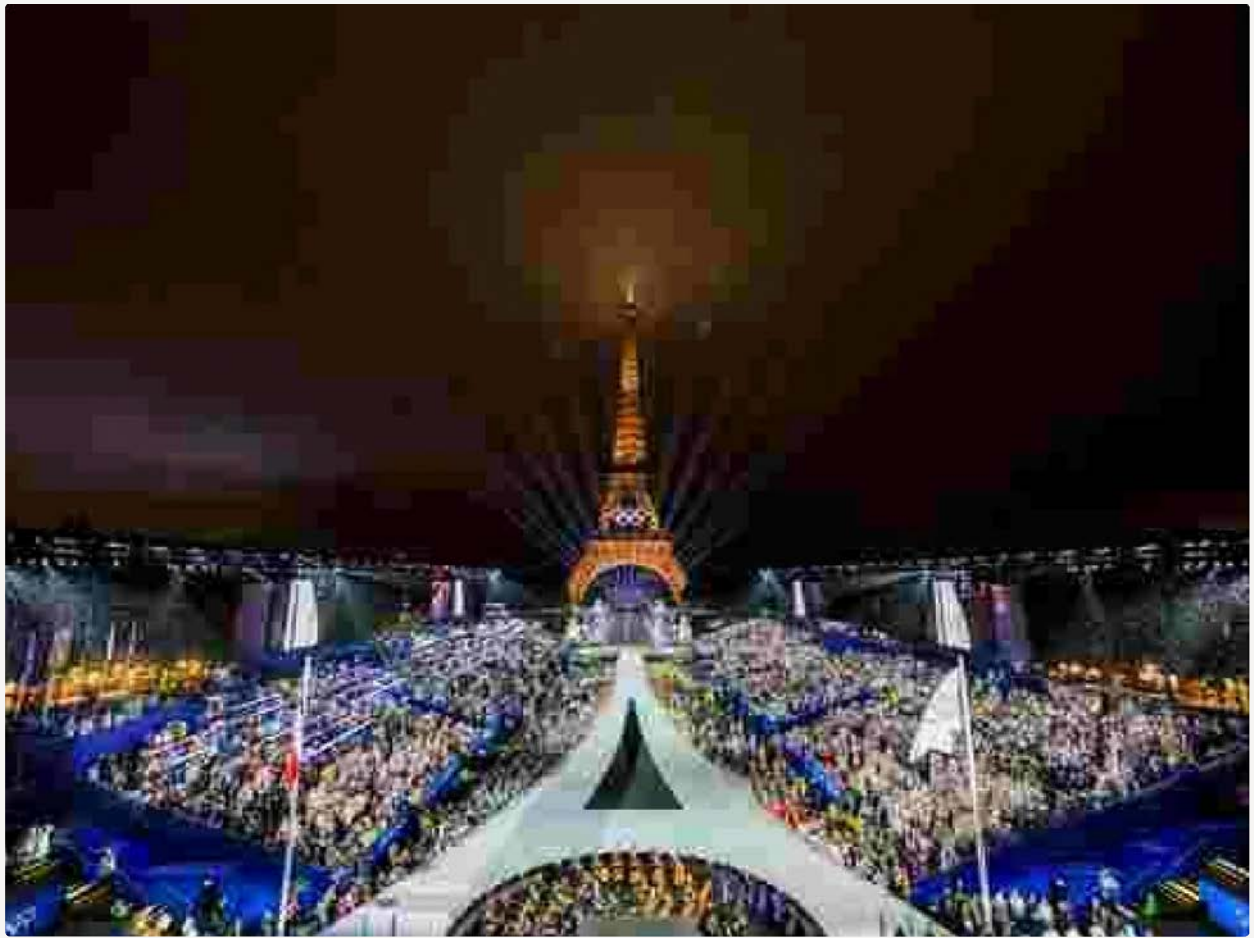
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