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Middle East synod is unique, and here's why

John L. Allen Jr. | Oct. 8, 2010

Girls talk beside a mural showing Christian churches at the Latin Patriarchate School in Reneh, Israel, Sept. 23. The Oct. 10-24 Synod of Bishops for the Middle East will discuss the situation of Christians in the Middle East. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

In broad strokes, one Synod of Bishops in Rome is pretty much like another one ? the same procedures, the same structures, often the same faces and same issues. Yet there are several features which make the Oct. 10-24 Synod for the Middle East unique, which were highlighted this morning by Archbishop Nikola Eterovi?, a Croat who heads the Vatican department for synods of bishops, in a briefing for reporters.

Ad orientem

For one thing, this is clearly a synod *ad orientem*, meaning directed to the East. Of the 185 bishops taking part (out of a total of some 270 participants), 140 come from the 22 Eastern Catholic churches in union with Rome, meaning that just 45 represent the Latin Rite. In most synods, the bishops and other participants from the East are almost a footnote ? this time around, they?re the main act.

Read the full report here: **Middle East synod is unique, and here's why** [1]

John Allen will be filing reports throughout the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East. Stay tuned to NCR Today [2] for updates.

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