



31st Sunday Ordinary Time – 05 November 2023

POPE FRANCIS REMINDS US AGAIN TO REJECT CLERICALISM



While coverage of the conclusion of the first in-person part of the church's synod on synodality is understandably garnering a lot of attention, especially as journalists and commentators begin to unpack the final synthesis document, I don't want to lose sight of a notable intervention that Pope Francis delivered on Wednesday of last week (Oct. 25), days before the close of this year's session. In his remarks, which were delivered in Spanish, the pope began by

describing the church as "the faithful people of God, holy and sinful, a people convoked and called with the power of the beatitudes and of Matthew 25." This clear and simple, yet beautiful, statement follows from the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, which reminds all the faithful that the church is first and foremost the "people of God." The reference to this theme from Vatican II recurred throughout the synodal discussions, especially in the final week. The primary target of Francis' denouncement is a church governed by clericalism. This should be no surprise to anybody who has followed the pope's ministry as bishop of Rome over the years. In fact, ten years ago to the month, I wrote a column that ran with the title, "Lead us not into clericalism." In that essay, I lifted up Pope Francis' criticism of merciless and self-centered clergy, noting that his focus on the need that "the ministers of the church must be ministers of mercy above all," as he put it, was deeply in keeping with the vision of ministry articulated in the 13th century by his namesake St. Francis of Assisi. Subsequently, the pope has named and called for the rejection of clericalism throughout his pontificate. One only has to read the numerous addresses to priests and bishops collected in the 2017 volume, *With the Smell of the Sheep*, to see how frequently the theme surfaces for Pope Francis. What the pope is pointing to here is the all-too-common obsession some ordained ministers have with power and control, as well as the conflation of their personal identities with their ministerial offices. It's not unusual for some priests to refer to something they call "my priesthood," as if the reception of holy orders or the exercise of sacramental ministry was something magical, individually possessed and independent of the rest of the baptized. What really matters? For some of the clergy, separateness and even a sense of superiority is what matters most. We can see this in the way in which some of the bishops at the synod expressed frustration at the presence and voting rights of those who are not bishops, especially lay women and men, at what is called a Synod of Bishops. But as Pope Francis has consistently noted, the vocation of the ordained is not a call to specialness or power over others but, as Jesus repeatedly notes throughout the Gospels, an invitation to humility and service as one Christian among others. We clergy are meant to walk with and accompany our fellow Christians on our collective journey of faith, which is why the Second Vatican Council also refers to the church as a "pilgrim people." One of the beautiful images that remains with me from this year's synodal gathering in Rome are the circular tables set up for discussion that included a range of people, genders, races and roles in the church – from the pope to a college student to a religious sister – all sitting together, all invited to speak and listen, all sharing one common baptism. I hope that, moving forward, we can have a greater appreciation for what we share as siblings to one another in baptism, called by Christ and united in the Holy Spirit. And, especially for those of us who are ordained, may we continually recall the pope's direct warning: "Clericalism is a thorn, it is a scourge, it is a form of worldliness that defiles and damages the face of the Lord's bride [the church]; it enslaves the holy, faithful people of God."

Courtesy Daniel P. Horan – National Catholic Reporter

November Mass of Remembrance

In James's Street the celebration is on Saturday 11 November at 6.30pm. In Meath Street you are welcome to come along on Sunday 19 November at 11am.



Talks on the Mystics

The Church of St Francis Xavier (Gardiner Street Parish) would like to invite you to join us for Talks on the Mystics. This is a series of seven talks by Fr Brendan Comerford SJ on seven different Christian mystics. Learn about their intimate experiences of God and their growth in the Christian life. Saturday mornings from November 4 to December 16, 10am to 12.15pm, in the John Sullivan Room. No registration needed. Simply come and be inspired by the lives of St Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, St Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross, St Pierre Favre, St Edith Stein and Pope St John XXIII.



Bereavement Support

The Irish Hospice Foundation provides a free Bereavement Support Line. This National Freephone Service is available from 10am to 1pm, Monday to Friday, by calling 1800 807077. Visit www.hospicefoundation.ie for more information.



Aware

To help your mental health, consider Aware's phone-in and Zoom support and self-care groups, support line or support mail. For more information, visit www.aware.ie

31ST SUNDAY - ORDINARY TIME

Penitential Rite

Our God is a God of hope and healing. As we begin our celebration let us call to mind God's goodness to us.

Your Word to us is hope. Lord have mercy

You Word is healing and peace. Christ have mercy

Your Word to us is equality for all. Lord have mercy

May our healing God have mercy on us, forgive us our sin and bring peace to our lives. Amen

Malachi 1:14-2:2. 8-10

I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is feared throughout the nations. And now, priests, this warning is for you. If you do not listen, if you do not find it in your heart to glorify my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will send the curse on you and curse your very blessing. Indeed I have already cursed it, since there is not a single one of you who takes this to heart. But you, you have strayed from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your teaching. You have destroyed the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts. And so I in my turn have made you contemptible and vile in the eyes of the whole people in repayment for the way you have not kept to my paths but have shown partiality in your administration. Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why, then, do we break faith with one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?

1 Thessalonians 2:7-9. 13

Like a mother feeding and looking after her own children, we felt so devoted and protective towards you, and had come to love you so much, that we were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our whole lives as well. Let me remind you, brothers, how hard we used to work, slaving night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you while we were proclaiming God's Good News to you. Another reason why we constantly thank God for you is that as soon as you heard the message that we brought you as God's message, you accepted it for what it really is, God's message and not some human thinking; and it is still a living power among you who believe it.

Alleluia, alleluia!
You have only one Father, and he is in heaven for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. Alleluia!

Matthew 23:1-12

Addressing the people and his disciples Jesus said, 'The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do: since they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people's shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they! Everything

they do is done to attract attention, like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi. 'You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.

Prayer of the Faithful

Praise to You, God of love. You fill our lives with your wisdom, compassion and hope. We bless you and thank you. Lord hear us

For the gift of Jesus your Son, who, through his humanity, has made us one with you. We bless you and thank you. Lord hear us

For Your Spirit, who breathes your life into us, calling us to be a source of healing and reconciliation, we bless you and thank you. Lord hear us

Lord, the death of our loved ones fills us with sorrow as does the death of those who die needlessly through violence and war. May their memory inspire us to be more faithful to the gospel. Lord hear us

May we as a church, know the real meaning of authority. May the ring of truth and the desire to serve, be in our words and lives as it was in Jesus' life. Lord hear us

For all in our political system, that whatever power they have, may be put at the service of the community and especially those with the least opportunity. Lord hear us

In silence we call to mind those who need our prayer and support.....Lord hear us

Reflection

May you have the grace and wisdom
To act kindly, learning
To distinguish between what is
Personal and what is not.
May you be hospitable to criticism.
May you never put yourself at the centre of things.
May you act not from arrogance but out of service.
May you work on yourself,
Building up and refining the ways of your mind.
May those who work for you know
You see and respect them.
May you learn to cultivate the art of presence
In order to engage with those who meet you.
When someone fails or disappoints you,
May the graciousness with which you engage
Be their stairway to renewal and refinement.



John O'Donohue