

Fr. Jim's First Homily on the Synod

"We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in your name"

(First lines of prayer for the Synod called by Pope Francis).

We, The Ecclesia, the Church on earth, are gathered into a faith community to stand before the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew word "Hesed", the hesedness of God, forms the basis of my homilies.

The root meaning of "Hesed" means to bow one's head toward another that proceeds a covenant relationship. The favoured English translation of "Hesed" is "Lovingkindness".

Jesus promises us that the Holy Spirit is our teacher, guide, and help and the spiritual power of our spoken words before the earth's political, economic, and governing forces. Therefore, in the Holy Spirit's power and His name, Almighty God the Father will give us the words to speak in Jesus's name when necessary.

The language of the shepherd, flock and sheep is often not recognised in the everyday life of a young city dweller—the questions of the Synod process called by Pope Francis allows Bishops to listen to the Holy Spirit-filled answers of the people on the street.

With you alone to guide the "Ecclesia," the Catholic faithful, who give you a home in their heart for you to teach us the way we must go and how to pursue your will in our journeying to join the Church in Heaven.

The Pope and Bishops will assemble in Rome and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide their thinking and spoken words in the name of Jesus Christ to God the Father's glory. The Catholic world community will respond in faith and a Holy-Spirit-filled activity to the letter and spirit of the Synodal outcome.

The forthcoming Synod does not threaten the life and ministry of the Church. Nevertheless, the Synod depends on the Holy Spirit to guide the Church to the right outcome in accord with the Chief Shepherd's want for his Church today and into the future to the glory of God the Father.

Father, You are Holy indeed and "For our sake, Jesus opened His arms on the Cross; He put an end to death and revealed the resurrection. In this, the Godman Jesus Christ fulfilled your will and won for you a Holy People.

The Church Family is holy because Christ is the head of the mystical body. Therefore, bishops must not be afraid of the Holy-Spirit filled voice of the people of the street. The consultative role of the laity in the life of the Church is a Holy Spirit-filled platform to make present in their life the teaching of Jesus that cleanses the hierarchy of the Church from wrong thinking and actions. It is Jesus's teaching that cleanses the Church from destroying itself. In listening to the teachings of Jesus, the laity has a Holy Spirit-filled voice that the Bishops cannot ignore or dismiss as human foolishness. The laity is not an obscure group of the unlearned faithful with little good to say to influence the Bishops' thinking. On the contrary, it is right and just for the laity's voice to be listened to with respect and care.

The Church at prayer prays the prayer of Jesus. The laity comprises the most significant house of prayer within the Church family. The monopoly on worship does not belong to clerics and religious. The Church is a gathering house of prayer and worship to God for all peoples and nations.

The loving kindness of the heart of our God who visits us like the dawn from on high proclaims God's mercy, grace, righteousness, loyalty and faithfulness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Synod recognises the togetherness of all the faithful who make up the mystical body of Christ. It is as one people united in Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit's power to act to the glory of God the Father as His adopted children on earth.

Distinct from Scripture and Christian theology is the living faith of the Church, which the early Father's called the 'rule of faith', the 'canon of truth', 'Apostolic Tradition' expressed in Christian Liturgy, creeds, prayer, hymns, catechesis, homilies, pastoral letters and so forth.

As a Parish, we approach the Synod's questionnaire not from our theological self-understanding but the 'rule of faith.' The 'rule of faith' is the absolute truth of God's self-revelation and the mystery of our salvation in Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit's divine power. The 'rule of faith' is central to our Christian conviction that God is One, yet, three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Three-Personed God's Divine consciousness comes upon the Church in the Holy Spirit's power. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of love guiding the words and the nature of our togetherness in our Holy Spirit-filled gathering together for the forthcoming Synod.

The Church Family have a knowledge of God that encompasses all who live the life and worship of the Catholic Faith. The laity constitutes the more extraordinary gathering of God's people in prayer and worship. **God's presence is constant and He is always with His People.** Therefore, it is right the voice of the laity is listened to intently by the apostles' successors. Humanity journeys together toward the truth of God as living in the Kingdom of God in Heaven. Love rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

In love, let us all gather together on the road of human life and the revealed and unrevealed divine truth of God and the mystery of ourselves in the name of the One God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so that our lives glorify God and honour each other.