

Pastoral Message: October 17, 2021

This weekend we open, as a local church, the Synod on Synodality. The gospel shows James and John seeking positions of power rather than the call to serve. This certainly in recent times has been a problem in our church. I often reflect in the parish that the greatest signs of leadership are seen not necessarily in those who carry positions or titles, but rather in those who are willing to serve. Many of these people go largely unnoticed, but they embody the gospel. The gospel reminds us of this call of what we do on the altar that Jesus enters into human suffering with compassion to bring healing, and that as his disciples that call to serve is the gospel message. We can see all too clearly in our own diocese and universal church that at times it has been about position and power at the expense of others, and many times the abuse of others. May this synod bring healing.

On Monday in Bible study, we reflected on the synod and what the group thought these scriptures offer as we begin this process. They had great insights. One was that we speak up boldly and not be afraid to say what is needed. It is in the boldness, as the reading from Hebrews reminds us, that comes the mercy. We need to speak boldly and listen with charity. Another person pointed out that we need to not be afraid of arguments and disagreements, that the Holy Spirit is in that and may be showing us a way forward. The group also mentioned that we need openness to not be afraid of new paths we may be being lead down. Lastly and most importantly, we need to listen to those that have been hurt or abused by the church. There are times, we discussed, where the church makes statements and they don't realize it hurts people we love, and we need to be more sensitive to that and more like Jesus who brought mercy and love. Please know you are welcome to join our Monday scripture study where we try to practice synodality every week, which means we are on a journey together and trying to follow the Lord. We try in our scripture study to make sure everybody is able to share boldly, and we listen with charity. I believe in all aspects of our life as a community we are called to do that, and, if we do, this synod will be fruitful for our parish and universal church.

I offer this prayer that we may consider praying daily or regularly for the success of the synod. This prayer is offered to us for the Synod and was prayed every day at the Second Vatican Council when the Holy Spirit brought a fresh wind and renewal for our Church. Pope John XXIII, now a saint, opened the Second Vatican Council. His feast day was this past Monday, October 11. We ask for his intercession that this synod may bring about renewal and change. Saint John the XXIII, as we begin this synod, pray for us!

Prayer for the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, "We stand before You, Holy Spirit," which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal journey from 2021 to 2023, we propose to the following simplified version,[1] so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray it more easily.

**We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.**

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**Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.**

**Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.**

**All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.**

Amen.