

Reflections for Sunday 8 October 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 5:1-7 Philippians 4:6-9 Matthew 21:33-43

Accompanied by prayer, and after two years of worldwide preparation and consultation, the Synod, a gathering of women and men, lay and ordained from around the world, began last Wednesday in Rome.

Here in our Archdiocese, as part of that worldwide consultation almost 13,000 of us engaged in 'spiritual conversations' in parishes about our joys, our sorrows, our hopes and fears for what the Church can be today and in the future. The synodal invitation to listen to each other, and to walk together in prayer accompanied by the Holy Spirit, was received enthusiastically. It was clear that respondents valued the opportunity to share and participate in collective discernment.

The synod is a process of spiritual discernment that unfolds in prayer and in dialogue with the word of God. As Pope Francis reminds us it is not a parliament or debating society. In the short reading today, Paul invites the community to prayer – for anything they need – and reassures them that the God of peace will guard them and their thoughts. Nothing is more important on the Synodal Pathway than we all lift up our hearts in prayer for each other, for those meeting in Rome and for the outcome of the two-part assembly, this year and in 2024.

We are all called by God to take part. God calls US to build the Kingdom here on earth in the circumstances of our daily lives. God does not call us because we are the best, but because we are available. Having called us, God asks us to use whatever gifts we have and to be trustworthy. We can easily say to ourselves, "I am not the best Catholic or Christian" but we have still been called to that service. Aware of our weakness we are still called to follow Jesus as faithfully as we can. We can say that other people have more patience, more wisdom than we do. God, nevertheless, asks us to use the patience and the wisdom that we have.

It is always easy to point to someone else who is more qualified, better suited, to do the tasks that we have been called to do. But pointing to another does not excuse us. We are called not because God needs someone to build the kingdom, we are trusted by God to undertake this task.

The Synodal Pathway will help all of us women and men, lay and ordained to discern how best to live out our baptism calling in building up the Kingdom of God in a fractured and uncertain world. It will help us to do this, walking together, guided by the Spirit.

Pope Francis challenges us, he asks, "Are we prepared for the adventure of this journey? Or are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: "It's useless" or "We've always done it this way"? Celebrating Synod means walking on the same road, walking together".

The tenants in the gospel parable today proved themselves unworthy of the trust that was placed in them. Each day we have an opportunity to prove ourselves worthy of the trust that God has placed in us. The message of the gospel reading is that Jesus reveals a God who works to bring new life. We are assured that the human story, even at times of challenge or despondency is contained within the greater story of God's persistent loving initiative towards us.