**Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A:** **24.09.23**

10.30am Cathedral of the Assumption, Carlow

**Introduction**:

I welcome all of you who join us for this mornings Mass here in the Cathedral of the Assumption, Carlow. I’m conscious today we are joined by many on the Cathedral webcam, as the intention of this Mass is to honour the memory of Francis Neerman, son of Auguste Neerman, manager of Carlow Sugar Factory from 1939-1949.

Francis was baptised here on April 1st, 1944. In this Mass I pray for all the Neerman Family gone to their eternal reward. I welcome Francis’ daughter Marguerite and her family and others who join us on our webcam from Switzerland.

Our gospel introduces us to what we might call the eleventh-hour folk, those who saunter in at the last minute … we’re all at home with this morning’s gospel. You know the kind of folk who never turn up on time! 6pm means 7.30pm if you’re lucky!! Our parable touches on that most sensitive of employer/employee relationships - the wage slip, job satisfaction and the discontentment that follows where last in are paid the same as those who are there all day.

As our liturgy focuses on the value we place on work, on time, on effort – for our idleness, our slackening on the job, our not putting our shoulder to the wheel … all of us at times fall victim to acedia, that noonday devil … let’s pray for the Lord’s love and mercy …

**First Reading**: **Prophet Isaiah**: these words written about seven centuries before Christ are infused with a great sense of urgency, urging us to seek the Lord and turn back to him. The God we turn back to is reassuringly one rich in mercy … our first reading …

**Second Reading**: **Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians**: is written by an incarcerated Paul, unsure whether he will live or die … which one will bring him nearer to Christ? … our second reading

**Homily**:

October 9th and 10th 2021 might seem a long time back, and yet it’s just two years ago! It’s when Pope Francis invited the Universal Church to journey on what he called then “*the synodal process*”. It was very much a new language for our Church which in the past delivered decrees and promulgations *top down* so to speak, this process is very much seen as a *bottom up* approach. It makes some uncomfortable, because some people like simply being told what has to be done and doing it. This causes very real tensions for a bimillennial Church to change its style and its *modus operandi*.

Indeed the history of the Church would suggest that Synods can cause often fractious debate between those who see themselves as traditionalists and those who might feel they were progressives. Some see this Synod called by Pope Francis as the first proper reception of Vatican II, and we go back sixty years to that Council. For the Church time can move slowly but that shouldn’t inhibit us seeing fresh intrepretations for our world, our culture, our context.

I don’t think ‘*synodality*’ as a word appears in any of the voluminous Vatican II documents, but it certainly is a word that captures so much of the teaching and preaching of the pontificate of Pope Francis and of those documents sixty years earlier. We must become a listening Church. We must accompany people on their faith journey. We must walk with one another, keeping in step, not too quick and equally not too slow. This new way of doing things suggests the journey of synodality is as important as any final deliberations and decisions.

Pope Francis announced this Synod would be a two part process, the first gathering this October and the second one in October 2024. So the first one starts in the coming days. 440 will gather in Rome and that number will include lay women and men, religious as well as Bishops, all with voting rights. It will be a very different gathering. I understand that the seating in the Pope Paul VI Hall where we normally enjoy papal audiences will be removed to allow for round table discussions and conversations. Even the setting of the hall will give a message before conversations ever begin. It’s a sacred time, where delegates and those they represent, all of us, are walking on holy ground. Pope Francis desires that we at home are as much a part of the synod as those participating in the Pope Paul VI Auditorium.

Perhaps you engaged in the local conversations that led to our Diocesan Response or Synthesis. Maybe you didn’t. I encourage you to reread that Synthesis on our KandLe website. Also take a look at what is called the working document or the *Instrumentum Laboris* that guides the process in Rome. You see it doesn’t all happen in Rome. There are things we can begin here locally in our diocese, in our parishes, in our faith communities. I’m very aware the ‘*Put Out into the Deep*’ process is but one response to this time we are living through, but there will be others and there are others if we take time to reread the different syntheses and the many reports.

During the month of October, I invite you to pray for all that is happening in our Church at the moment. And I accept for some it can be a little unsettling. But Pope Francis reassures us “*without prayer there will be no Synod*”[[1]](#footnote-1). I remind you the synod is not a parliament or an assembly, it’s a place where we listen attentively to one another and are always guided by the Holy Spirit.

I invite the intention of the synodal process to be part of our prayer at daily Mass, on each Sunday, in our homes, in our schools and in our religious communities. That prayer might be no more or less than reciting the ‘*Prayer for the Synod*’. It might be offering an intention in our Prayers of Intercession or indeed dedicating its process to our period of adoration. Our psalm reassures us “*the Lord is close to all who call him*”[[2]](#footnote-2). And there are many who didn’t really engage in the synodal journey across the diocese and across the country, I encourage you all now to be part of this journey, like those working in the vineyard, even those who come late in the day are as well rewarded as those who have been there since the very start.

May the Holy Spirit guide our Church which we all love and all of us who make up the Church, as together we walk on sacred ground, the sacred ground that is the synodal journey. Amen.

1. Pope Francis, Prayer Intention for the Month of October 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ps.144:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)