

Holy Odors: New Scents for Shepherds and Sheep Today

Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB

50th Anniversary Kick-off celebration for the Association of Chicago Priests

St. John of the Cross Church – Western Springs, Illinois

Sunday, October 23, 2016

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the privilege of addressing a group of priests that I have long admired for your boldness, courage, fidelity and love of the Church. I have known about you and followed your work from the beginning of my formation for priestly ministry. My years in formation for religious life and priesthood were marked in no small way by the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and all that he was, stood for and represented for the American Church and far beyond. I began my ordained ministry 30 years ago with the themes of the *Seamless Garment* and the *Common Ground Initiative* that were among Cardinal Bernardin's legacies to us. I have tried to put those ideas and pastoral programs into practice in my own ministry. Cardinal Bernardin spoke often about you and loved his priests!

I was also blessed to enjoy the friendship of the late Cardinal Francis George, OMI, who I got to know years ago while he was Vicar General of his religious congregation. For over 20 years we visited one another numerous times and enjoyed one another's company. Joseph Bernardin and Francis George may have had different ecclesial visions, but they were very good and holy priests and shepherds. And now Chicago is blessed once again with a wonderful shepherd and pastor whose bold, courageous vision for the contemporary Church is "blazing" new paths not only for the Windy City but for the universal Church. Having shared last year's Synod experience with Archbishop Cupich, your Cardinal-in-waiting, was a privilege and great experience. I consider him a friend.

What I have always admired about the Association of Chicago Priests is your mission to foster dialogue and support among priests locally, nationally and abroad; your ability to nourish collaboration in ministry, your passion for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, and your real desire to promote peace, justice and equality wherever you are, especially among the poor and those on the peripheries of life. I am not surprised that so many of you have welcomed Pope Francis and the one whom he has sent to you as shepherd with open arms, minds and hearts. For the Bishop of Rome and the Bishop of Chicago live your vision each day.

Francis' vision of Priesthood

In a conversation with some representatives of the Lutheran Evangelical church in Rome on November 15, 2015, a young boy named Julius asked Pope Francis this question: "What do you enjoy most about being pope?" The Pope's very personal and simple reply is worth sharing with you in its entirety. He said:

"The answer is simple. If I ask you what food you enjoy most you will say cake, dessert. Won't you? But we need to eat a bit of everything. actually, what I enjoy most is being a parish priest, a pastor. I don't like paperwork. I don't like those jobs. I don't like giving formal interviews – this one isn't formal, it's family! – But I have to do it. So, what do I enjoy most? Parish work. Once, when I was rector of the theology faculty, I was also priest of the parish that was next to the

faculty, and you know, I loved teaching the children their catechism and doing a Mass with the children on Sundays. There were about 250 children, so it was difficult for all of them to keep quiet, it was difficult.”

Francis continued with Julius: *“Talking with children... I enjoy that...You are a boy so perhaps you will understand me. You children are down to earth, you don’t ask airy-fairy theoretical questions: “Why is this like that? Why . . . ?” You see, I like being a parish priest and in parish work what I enjoy most is being with children, talking with them, and you learn such a lot. You learn such a lot. I like being pope in a parish-priest way.”*

“Service. I enjoy it, meaning that I feel good doing it, when I visit the sick, when I talk to people who are a bit desperate or sad. I love going into prisons but I don’t mean I want to go to jail myself! Because when I talk with prisoners... perhaps you’ll understand what I mean – every time I go into a prison, I ask myself: “Why them and not me?” Then I feel Jesus Christ’s salvation, Jesus Christ’s love for me. Because he’s the one who saved me. I am just as much of a sinner as they are, but the Lord has taken me by the hand. I feel that too. And when I go into a prison I’m happy.”

“Being pope means being a bishop, being a parish priest, a pastor. If a pope doesn’t behave like a bishop, a parish priest, a pastor he may be a very intelligent, very important person and have a lot of influence in society, but I think – I think! – he won’t be happy in his heart. I don’t know if I have answered what you wanted to know.” (excerpted from a book soon to be released by Orbis Press, Pope Francis, ***With the Smell of the Sheep***. I highly recommend this book to every pastoral minister in the Church today).

From Pope Francis’s reply to Julius’s question we may surmise beyond the shadow of any doubt that this Pope really likes being “pope in a parish-priest way,” “being a pastor.” How can we forget his homily at his first Chrism Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on March 28, 2013, only two weeks after his election to the See of Peter? It was during that homily that he gave us new marching orders: to be pastors “with the smell of the sheep.” I have gone back and reread that homily a hundred times over the past three and a-half years.

On that morning in the Vatican basilica, the newly elected Pope sounded the overture of his Petrine service and our priestly ministry with some incredibly powerful symbols. Just listen to some of his graphic and stirring images:

“From the beauty of all these liturgical things, which is not so much about trappings and fine fabrics than about the glory of our God resplendent in his people, alive and strengthened, we turn now to a consideration of activity, action. The precious oil which anoints the head of Aaron does more than simply lend fragrance to his person; it overflows down to “the edges”. The Lord will say this clearly: his anointing is meant for the poor, prisoners and the sick, for those who are sorrowing and alone. My dear brothers, the ointment is not intended just to make us fragrant, much less to be kept in a jar, for then it would become rancid ... and the heart bitter.”

“A good priest can be recognized by the way his people are anointed: this is a clear proof. When our people are anointed with the oil of gladness, it is obvious: for example, when they leave

Mass looking as if they have heard good news. Our people like to hear the Gospel preached with “unction”, they like it when the Gospel we preach touches their daily lives, when it runs down like the oil of Aaron to the edges of reality, when it brings light to moments of extreme darkness, to the “outskirts” where people of faith are most exposed to the onslaught of those who want to tear down their faith.”

“We need to “go out”, then, in order to experience our own anointing, its power and its redemptive efficacy: to the “outskirts” where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight, and prisoners in thrall to many evil masters. It is not in soul-searching or constant introspection that we encounter the Lord: self-help courses can be useful in life, but to live our priestly life going from one course to another, from one method to another, leads us to become Pelagians and to minimize the power of grace, which comes alive and flourishes to the extent that we, in faith, go out and give ourselves and the Gospel to others, giving what little ointment we have to those who have nothing, nothing at all.”

“Those who do not go out of themselves, instead of being mediators, gradually become intermediaries, managers. We know the difference: the intermediary, the manager, “has already received his reward”, and since he doesn’t put his own skin and his own heart on the line, he never hears a warm, heartfelt word of thanks. This is precisely the reason for the dissatisfaction of some, who end up sad – sad priests - in some sense becoming collectors of antiques or novelties, instead of being shepherds living with “the odour of the sheep”.

“This I ask you: be shepherds, with the “odour of the sheep”, make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men. True enough, the so-called crisis of priestly identity threatens us all and adds to the broader cultural crisis; but if we can resist its onslaught, we will be able to put out in the name of the Lord and cast our nets. It is not a bad thing that reality itself forces us to “put out into the deep”, where what we are by grace is clearly seen as pure grace, out into the deep of the contemporary world, where the only thing that counts is “unction” – not function – and the nets which overflow with fish are those cast solely in the name of the One in whom we have put our trust: Jesus.”

“...May our people sense that we are the Lord’s disciples; may they feel that their names are written upon our priestly vestments and that we seek no other identity; and may they receive through our words and deeds the oil of gladness which Jesus, the Anointed One, came to bring us.”

Over the past three and a-half years, Francis has unpacked those words and modeled for us what he outlined in his first programmatic homily of his pontificate. What is his vision for the priesthood and episcopal ministry? How are bishops, priests and future priests to serve their people most faithfully and fruitfully? Here are nine motifs or themes which have emerged from both Pope Francis’ spoken words and also the witness of his own priestly and episcopal ministry.

1. The strength of a priest depends on his relationship with Christ. Pope Francis has said that the touchstone of how deeply a priest is living his vocation is the extent to which he seeks Christ in his daily life. In a typically direct question, Pope Francis asked a gathering of Rome’s priests at the beginning of Lent 2015, “At night, how does your day end? With God, or with television?” At

the heart of any priest's ministry must be a living relationship with Christ, so that the priest sees as Christ sees and loves as he loves. It took the disciples time to really "become Christ" to others so this is not a given at ordination. For this to happen, the priest needs to continue to grow in union with Christ through prayer and intimacy.

2. Just as he must be close to Christ so the priest must be close to the people he serves. Over and over again he asks us to take on the odor of the sheep we serve. If priests truly are to be pastors rather than administrators we need to "go out to meet the people," especially the lost sheep. The pastor who stays behind his computer in the presbytery is not an "authentic pastor." Pope Francis praised one priest for knowing his parishioners so well that he knew not only their names, but also their pets' names! In an age in which so many priests, bishops and curial officials are enchained to administrative tasks, Pope Francis is summoning us to reprioritize toward the Church's evangelical mission.

3. As Pope Francis emphasized in the homily of his inaugural Mass on March 19, 2013, a priest's authority must be linked to service, especially to the care and protection of the poorest, weakest, the least important and most easily forgotten. This means that we have to leave our comfort zone and have "real contact with the poor and the marginalized." Francis, who was known as the "slum bishop" in Argentina because of his work among the poor, has said that reaching out to those on the margins of society was "the most concrete way of imitating Jesus". His own first visits after moving to Rome during that first Holy Week were to a jail for juveniles and several months later to the southern Italian island of Lampedusa to pay tribute to impoverished immigrants who have died trying to get to Europe.

4. The priest and bishop must be a minister of mercy. Pope Francis told a group of newly-ordained priests that the most important advice he could give them was simply, "Be merciful." His motto *Miserando atque eligendo* ("Chosen Through the Eyes of Mercy") highlights that his own vocation was born in an experience of God's mercy, when as a 17-year-old boy *en route* to a high school dance, he went to confession on the feast of Matthew, the apostle and evangelist who himself experienced conversion because of his encounter with Jesus.

In March 2015, Pope Francis surprised the world by announcing a Jubilee Year of Mercy that formally began last December. Francis wanted this jubilee to go deeper spiritually and to be a far-reaching Christian witness of mercy to the world. During the first Angelus after his election to the See of Peter, Pope Francis stated: "*Feeling mercy, this word changes everything. This is the best thing we can feel: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand properly this mercy of God, this merciful Father who is so patient.*" (Angelus, March 17, 2013). Francis has repeated this thought since the beginning of his Petrine Ministry: "*Mercy is not just a pastoral attitude; it is the very substance of the Gospel message.*"

Pope Francis wants to bring the whole church, starting with the cardinals, bishops, priests and consecrated persons, to open themselves to God's mercy and to find concrete, creative ways to put mercy into practice in their areas of ministry. Mercy is essential because all people are sinners, in need of God's forgiveness and grace, and it is especially necessary today, at a time when "humanity is wounded," suffering from "the many slaveries of the third millennium" – not

just war and poverty and social exclusion, but also fatalism, hardheartedness and self-righteousness.

5. The priest and bishop are called to a simplicity of life. Diocesan priests do not take a vow of poverty, but commit themselves to a simple lifestyle. Pope Francis has repeatedly criticized priests who give in to vanity and worldly ambition. During his years in Buenos Aires, Cardinal Bergoglio's example of living in a small apartment rather than an episcopal palace, taking public transportation rather than a car with a driver, and cooking for himself (all of which we see mirrored in his new life as Pope – except the cooking!) was a clear challenge to his fellow priests to examine the sincerity and authenticity of their own spiritual poverty.

We can easily become fixated on lots of eye-catching, buzz-causing externals and great photo opportunities: A Pope who pays his pre-conclave bill at the priests' residence personally, immediately after his election; a Vicar of Christ who abandoned the red shoes - that were never an official part of the papal wardrobe! A Bishop of Rome who rides around Vatican City and his own diocese in a Ford Focus; a Successor of Peter who invites street people to his birthday breakfast. This Roman pontiff specializes in kissing babies and embracing the sick, disfigured broken bodies, and the abandoned of society. A pope who knows how to use a telephone, and uses it often. A pope who waits in line for the coat check at the Vatican Synod Hall, lines up for coffee, and introduces himself: "Sono Francesco. Come ti chiami?" We sit back, smile and utter: "What simplicity!" "Wow!" "Awesome!" "Finalmente!"

What is Francis teaching us through this style and these gestures that have become substance? The priest and bishop must be models of integrity. There can be no place in priests for a haughty clericalism, any kind of abuse of our position or a concern to climb the ecclesiastical career ladder, Pope Francis is teaching us that our authority derives not from worldly power and prestige but from simplicity of life, personal integrity and humility in imitation of Christ. The so-called Francis effect and related reform is not emanating from Assisi, Loyola, Manresa or even from Rome, as significant as those holy places may be! It is coming from another land where we find Bethlehem, Nazareth, Nain, Emmaus, Mount Tabor, Galilee and Jerusalem: the land of the Bible.

6. Priest are agents of the New Evangelization. By our very nature we are evangelizers, people who announce the good news through word and action. One of the greatest obstacles to the work of evangelization has always been routine or habit, which eliminates the freshness and persuasive power of Christian missionary outreach and witness. In paragraph 33 of his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. Francis writes: "*Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: "We have always done it this way". I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory.*"

We must direct our efforts courageously and naturally at today's modern *Areopagai* that are present in culture, in mass media, politics and the economy. We must give special attention to those who suffer, to the poor and marginalized. We can no longer wait for those no longer practicing the faith to return to the Church on their own: we must seek them out. We do not hesitate

to reach out by taking to the streets and public squares, by entering supermarkets, banks, schools, universities and colleges and wherever people can be found. Our missionary zeal must carry us “to the ends of the earth.”

7. The priest is a translator of holiness. The Church is the “home of holiness” and holiness is our most accurate image, our authentic calling card, and our greatest gift to the world. This holiness is the fire of God's Word that must be alive and burning within our hearts. It is this fire, this dynamism, that will burn away the evil within us and around us and cause holiness to burst forth, healing and transforming the society and culture surrounding us. Evil is only eradicated by holiness, not by harshness. Holiness introduces into society a seed that heals and transforms. The priest models this holiness and bears it to the world. It is a holiness that reveals itself in normalcy of everyday living and loving.

Pope Francis is canonizing saints at a rate not seen since John Paul II. In three and a-half years, he has presided over 30 canonizations, 12 more than his predecessor at the same point in his papacy. This includes last Sunday's canonization ceremony of seven new saints. Francis has waived the two-miracle rule required for canonization in several cases, accepting only one, or even none, no fewer than eight times. In select cases, that has served to speed up sainthood. They include the case of Fr. Peter Faber, one of the founders of the Society of Jesus and a figure viewed as a personal hero of the Pope. Francis praised Faber's “dialogue with all, even the most remote and even with his opponents, his simple piety, a certain naiveté perhaps, his being available straightaway, his careful interior discernment, the fact that he was a man capable of great and strong decisions but also capable of being so gentle and loving.”

At the canonization of two of his predecessors in the same ceremony in 2014 – John XXIII and John Paul II – Francis gave us insights into his own understanding of holiness: *Both new saints “were not afraid to look upon the wounds of Jesus, to touch his torn hands and his pierced side. They were not ashamed of the flesh of Christ, they were not scandalized by him, by his cross; they did not despise the flesh of their brother, because they saw Jesus in every person who suffers and struggles. These were two men of courage, filled with the parrhesia of the Holy Spirit, and they bore witness before the Church and the world to God's goodness and mercy.” John XXIII and John Paul II resisted every attempt to disincarnate the message of their founder, Jesus Christ.”*

He concluded his homily that morning with these words: “May these two new saints and shepherds of God's people intercede for the Church, so that during this two-year journey toward the Synod she may be open to the Holy Spirit in pastoral service to the family. May both of them teach us not to be scandalized by the wounds of Christ and to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of divine mercy, which always hopes and always forgives, because it always loves.”

8. The Priest and the bishop are bearers of joy. The joy of ordained ministry finds its origin in the heart and mind of Christ. Before taking leave of the Apostles on Holy Thursday Jesus said to them: "I tell you this that my joy may be full!" Certainly this wish is not addressed only to the priest, but is ratified and confirmed in the heart of a priest. The priest experiences Christ when He is received with faith and served with love, as a fount of inexhaustible and unalterable joy!

I have often wondered why we don't depict Jesus smiling or laughing. How is it that the Scriptures don't mention anything about Jesus smiling or his humorous responses to his slow disciples? How could he not have laughed and smiled when he was swarmed by children who obviously loved his company? What did Jesus look like when he stared at Zacchaeus hiding in that Jericho sycamore tree? I am certain that there were smiles, laughter, and humor. When the crowds took leave of him on that Galilean hillside, having eaten their fill... how could Jesus not have smiled in relief? There are many in the Church today who have difficulty with the image of a smiling happy Jesus and even more difficulty with a smiling and joyful pope! They would prefer stern, dour, tragedy-stricken figures and shepherds who lead people into deep depression and don't seem to offer much hope!

Why should priests be joyful? Why must we be joyful? Because it is in our DNA as priests to be bearers of joy! In Pope Francis' address to the Congregation for the Clergy on November 20, 2015, he said: "It isn't normal for a priest to be often sad, irritable, or harsh. it's no good and it does no good either to the priest or to his people. ... We priests are apostles of joy, we proclaim the gospel that is the supreme "good news." Pope Francis is convinced that "a priest who is a man at peace will be able to spread serenity around him, even in difficult moments, and convey a sense of the beauty of a relationship with the Lord." He urges pastors to reflect the joy and love of God—never to be "sad priests."

9. As bishops and priests, we must be instruments, agents and ambassadors of dialogue in world and sometimes a Church that thrive in monologue. We are called to an alternative way of being in the world and in the Church. What the Lord requires of us is boldness and courage to be open to all, to be pastoral ministers who listen deeply to others, accompany them on their arduous journeys through life, all the while never dismissing nor diminishing the one absolute in our lives: that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of us all.

During his visit to the United States last year, Pope Francis used the word "dialogue" twenty-three times in five of his addresses. Notably, in his historic address to Congress on September 24, 2015, he made clear his desire to enter into a dialogue "with all of you," referring to the American people. He elevated **Thomas Merton**, the great 20th century American Trappist monk, as the preeminent model of dialogue for the country: "It is my duty to build bridges and to help all men and women, in any way possible, to do the same."

The Holy Father teaches us and models for us that dialogue is not limited to political activity outside of the Church. In his stirring address to the Bishops of the United States gathered in St. Matthew's Cathedral on September 23, 2015, he presented a portrait or job-description of shepherds (and also priests) for each of us:

"It is not about preaching complicated doctrines, but joyfully proclaiming Christ who died and rose for our sake. The "style" of our mission should make our hearers feel that the message we preach is meant "for us".

The Pope spoke of the shepherds needed for today's Church: *"Shepherds who do not pasture themselves but are able to step back, away from the center, to "decrease", in order to feed God's family with Christ. Who keep constant watch, standing on the heights to look out with God's*

eyes on the flock which is his alone. Who ascend to the height of the cross of God's Son, the sole standpoint which opens to the shepherd the heart of his flock."

"Shepherds who do not lower our gaze, concerned only with our concerns, but raise it constantly toward the horizons which God opens before us and which surpass all that we ourselves can foresee or plan. Who also watch over ourselves, so as to flee the temptation of narcissism, which blinds the eyes of the shepherd, makes his voice unrecognizable and his actions fruitless. In the countless paths which lie open to your pastoral concern, remember to keep focused on the core which unifies everything: "You did it unto me" (Mt 25:31-45)."

"And yet we are promoters of the culture of encounter. We are living sacraments of the embrace between God's riches and our poverty. We are witnesses of the abasement and the condescension of God who anticipates in love our every response."

"Dialogue is our method, not as a shrewd strategy but out of fidelity to the One who never wearies of visiting the marketplace, even at the eleventh hour, to propose his offer of love (Mt 20:1-16)."

"The path ahead, then, is dialogue among yourselves, dialogue in your presbyterates, dialogue with lay persons, dialogue with families, dialogue with society. I cannot ever tire of encouraging you to dialogue fearlessly. The richer the heritage which you are called to share with parrhesia, the more eloquent should be the humility with which you should offer it. Do not be afraid to set out on that "exodus" which is necessary for all authentic dialogue. Otherwise, we fail to understand the thinking of others, or to realize deep down that the brother or sister we wish to reach and redeem, with the power and the closeness of love, counts more than their positions, distant as they may be from what we hold as true and certain. Harsh and divisive language does not befit the tongue of a pastor, it has no place in his heart; although it may momentarily seem to win the day, only the enduring allure of goodness and love remains truly convincing."

He continued that theme yesterday (October 22, 2016) during his Extraordinary Jubilee Audience in St. Peter's Square before a crowd numbering over 100,000 people. His theme was "Mercy and Dialogue."

In his catechesis Francis used the Gospel account of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman to reflect on the importance of "dialogue" as an aspect of mercy.

"Dialogue allows people to know themselves and to understand the one another's needs. It is both a sign of respect, an expression of charity; it allows us to see one another as a gift from God. But often when we encounter one another, we are not prepared to listen, preferring instead to interrupt and convince the other that we are right. True dialogue requires moments of silence, and the ability to welcome the other as a gift from God."

"Dialoguing helps people to humanize relationships and to overcome misunderstandings. There is a great need for dialogue in our families, and how much more easily would questions be resolved if we could learn to listen to one another!"

He concluded his catechesis, saying, *“Dialogue breaks down the walls of divisions and misunderstandings; it creates bridges of communication and does not allow anyone to remain isolated, closing themselves into their own little world. How much better the world will be, he said, if we could listen to one another, explain ourselves meekly, rather than shouting at one another. Through dialogue, we can make the signs of the mercy of God grow, and make them instruments of welcome and respect.”*

Are these not the very qualities that your Association of Chicago Priests has embraced since its foundation 50 years ago? Give thanks to God for the journey accomplished and all that lies ahead

Pastoral Visit to the United States – September 2015

What can we learn from the Pope’s historic visit to the United States one year ago? Did Francis accomplish what he set out to do? How should we evaluate the response of the American Church? Of the American people? What lasting impact will the visit have on the country?

Having accompanied the Pope along that visit, it was undoubtedly the most significant of any Pope to this continent. I was fortunate enough to be on the ground in the three cities Pope Francis visited in the United States: Washington, New York and Philadelphia – working closely with the mainstream media. I was captivated by each of his very moving addresses. For one who had never visited America prior to September 2015, Pope Francis demonstrated a remarkable ability to teach in a comprehensive manner through eighteen formal opportunities to speak in the United States. Some of those addresses were to a specific audience, others to the entire nation or, in the case of the UN address, to the world. He touched on a wide range of topics: religious liberty, human dignity, family life, politics, ecology, justice, peace, war, persecution, immigration, dialogue, fundamentalism, the consistent ethic of life, the death penalty, the economy, sexual abuse, pastoral attitudes in the church, fear, rigidity, mission, faith, hope, love, God, the workings of the Holy Spirit, Jesus, etc. There were many more topics as well!

For our purpose this evening, I would like to look at his words addressed to us priests, religious and seminarians assembled in St. Patrick’s Cathedral on September 24, 2015, Francis had these words for us:

“In the hope of helping you to persevere on the path of fidelity to Jesus Christ, I would like to offer two brief reflections. The first concerns the spirit of gratitude. The joy of men and women who love God attracts others to him; priests and religious are called to find and radiate lasting satisfaction in their vocation. Joy springs from a grateful heart. Truly, we have received much, so many graces, so many blessings, and we rejoice in this. It will do us good to think back on our lives with the grace of remembrance. Remembrance of when we were first called, remembrance of the road travelled, remembrance of graces received... and, above all, remembrance of our encounter with Jesus Christ so often along the way. Remembrance of the amazement which our encounter with Jesus Christ awakens in our hearts. To seek the grace of remembrance so as to grow in the spirit of gratitude. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves: are we good at counting our blessings?”

“A second area is the spirit of hard work. A grateful heart is spontaneously impelled to serve the Lord and to find expression in a life of commitment to our work. Once we come to realize how much God has given us, a life of self-sacrifice, of working for him and for others, becomes a privileged way of responding to his great love.”

“Yet, if we are honest, we know how easily this spirit of generous self-sacrifice can be dampened. There are a couple of ways that this can happen; both are examples of that “spiritual worldliness” which weakens our commitment to serve and diminishes the wonder of our first encounter with Christ.”

“We can get caught up measuring the value of our apostolic works by the standards of efficiency, good management and outward success which govern the business world. Not that these things are unimportant! We have been entrusted with a great responsibility, and God’s people rightly expect accountability from us. But the true worth of our apostolate is measured by the value it has in God’s eyes. To see and evaluate things from God’s perspective calls for constant conversion in the first days and years of our vocation and, need I say, great humility. The cross shows us a different way of measuring success. Ours is to plant the seeds: God sees to the fruits of our labors. And if at times our efforts and works seem to fail and produce no fruit, we need to remember that we are followers of Jesus... and his life, humanly speaking, ended in failure, the failure of the cross”

“Another danger comes when we become jealous of our free time, when we think that surrounding ourselves with worldly comforts will help us serve better. The problem with this reasoning is that it can blunt the power of God’s daily call to conversion, to encounter with him. Slowly but surely, it diminishes our spirit of sacrifice, renunciation and hard work. It also alienates people who suffer material poverty and are forced to make greater sacrifices than ourselves. Rest is needed, as are moments of leisure and self-enrichment, but we need to learn how to rest in a way that deepens our desire to serve with generosity. Closeness to the poor, the refugee, the immigrant, the sick, the exploited, the elderly living alone, prisoners and all God’s other poor, will teach us a different way of resting, one which is more Christian and generous.”

“Gratitude and hard work: these are two pillars of the spiritual life which I have wanted to share with you this evening. I thank you for prayers and work, and the daily sacrifices you make in the various areas of your apostolate. Many of these are known only to God, but they bear rich fruit for the life of the Church.”

Conclusion

Pope Francis models for us each day a Church of tenderness and mercy, an incarnational Church that walks with people on the journey. A Church that listens, discerns, accompanies, forgives, blesses, speaks boldly and courageously; a Church that weeps with those who weep and rejoices with those who rejoice. A Church that does everything she can to resist the temptation to reduce the faith to moralism; a Church that resists all attempts to disincarnate the message and the person she holds deep within her heart: Jesus Christ. A Church that strives to integrate people back into the community of faith.

From the Pope's reply to young Julius's question, we may safely say that the Bishop of Rome "enjoys being pope in a parish-priest way," "being a pastor" because it gives him joy. What is our image of this "Franciscan" papacy? Hopefully it is one of a smiling and happy Francis carrying a lamb on his shoulders during his visit to the Roman parish of Sant'Alfonso de' Liguori, in his diocese of Rome, on January 6, 2014. It is an image of a good shepherd who truly has the smell and the weight of the sheep on his shoulders, and the deep joy and mercy of the Lord in his heart

Let us never forget his parting words to his brother bishops of the United States of America last year, as he took leave of them in St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, DC. Francis spoke of the Church and priestly ministry that he envisions for America and for the world:

"...a Church which can gather around the family fire remains able to attract others. And not any fire, but the one which blazed forth on Easter morn. The risen Lord continues to challenge the Church's pastors through the quiet plea of so many of our brothers and sisters: "Have you something to eat?" We need to recognize the Lord's voice, as the apostles did on the shore of the lake of Tiberius (Jn 21:4-12). It becomes even more urgent to grow in the certainty that the embers of his presence, kindled in the fire of his passion, precede us and will never die out. Whenever this certainty weakens, we end up being caretakers of ash, and not guardians and dispensers of the true light and the warmth which causes our hearts to burn within us (Lk 24:32)."

It is that heartburn, and only that type of heartburn, and that new odor of holiness, service and normalcy that I leave with you this evening in Chicago. Happy Anniversary brothers! May your hearts continue to be on fire for Francis, for Jesus, and for the Church.

Biography of Fr. Rosica

Ordained a priest in the Congregation of St. Basil in 1986, Fr. Thomas Rosica, a native of Rochester, New York, holds advanced degrees in Theology and Sacred Scripture from Regis College in the University of Toronto, the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. Fr. Rosica has lectured in Sacred Scripture at Canadian Universities in Toronto, Windsor and London and served as Executive Director of the Newman Centre Catholic Chaplaincy at the University of Toronto from 1994-2000. In June 1999, he was appointed by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops as the Chief Executive Officer and National Director of the World Youth Day and the Papal Visit of Pope John Paul II, that took place in Toronto during July, 2002. On July 1, 2003, Fr. Rosica became the founding Chief Executive Officer of Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation, Canada's first national Catholic Television Network. He continues in that position. Appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in 2009, Fr. Rosica also served as Media Attaché at four Synods of Bishops at the Vatican in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2015. Since the Papal Transition in 2013, he has been English language Assistant to Holy See Press Office and relating on a daily basis to several hundred English language journalists and television and radio personnel around the world.

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