

## 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

The participants at the Vatican's synod on synodality concluded their work with a 42-page document summarizing where they are so far. The same group of clergy and laity will reconvene next October to continue their work and bring some closure. So far we've learned that the participants entered a prayerful experience of listening to one another, while trying to discern where the Holy Spirit is directing the Catholic Church. A peaceful sharing of contrasting ideas was one important goal of the synod, and by all reports it succeeded well.

The final document includes many topics including evangelization, bringing the gospel to the world; the place for lay leadership, especially among women; the embrace of other Christian Churches; and even the use of the digital culture. Conversations on these topics ensued while, outside the synod hall, wars raged around the world, the cry of the poor continually needed attention, and care for the earth and its climate remained a concern.

Pope Francis asked the participants not to grant interviews during the process, and he limited media access in order to foster dialogue inside the hall. He remarked, "This is not a television program where we can talk about everything." Far from entrenching polarized sides, the synod got everyone listening to one another in respect, to discern the will of God.

Discerning God's will is a theme in today's responsorial psalm, which is often used for morning prayer in the Catholic Church because of its opening verse, "O God, you are my God; at dawn I seek you; for you my soul is thirsting." We sing it today because the first reading from the Book of Wisdom presents an image of God as wisdom herself. Wisdom is as anxious to be known as we should be to know wisdom. The bible says of wisdom, "she is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her. She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire; Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed." Those verses foreshadow the gospel, where those who obtain the greatest rewards are the five virgins who were wise.

Yearning to know is common to us all, but we humans need to be careful about where we obtain our wisdom. Sometimes idle curiosity leads us into relationships, websites, and entertainments where we do not belong. As Psalm 63 puts it, often our "flesh is pining, like a dry, weary land without water." It's in those moments of dryness when we sometimes satisfy our pining with activities that waste time rather than feed the soul.

Often a true search for wisdom demands that we listen to someone holding contrasting ideas, someone who may challenge our assumptions, who sees the world and the Church in a different sense. If that person is also open to dialogue, you can create synodality in your own lives. You discover something in common, such as a love for wisdom, and you build on that.

When a difficult choice confronts us, we pine to know the will of the Holy Spirit. Some choices bring temporary delight rather than enduring happiness. Listening before choosing brings the best results. Then we can pray to God in the words of Psalm 63, "My soul shall be filled as with a banquet; with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you."