

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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Tradition or Modernity? ...an attitude of Faith

In these days of rapid change in so many areas of our life it is well worth pausing and reflecting on the impact these changes have in the way we see things as well as how this may impact on our laws and faith (belief). Sadly, but perhaps realistically, there will always be people who by nature and personality either have a preference for the 'old' as opposed to the 'new', who either hate change or welcome it. It is sad however when this becomes an area of conflict and a divide between people, especially in the Church, which by definition should be of one heart. Differences of opinion may always be present - St. Peter and St. Paul certainly found this over the issue of 'circumcision', a revered custom of the Jews. Yet they reconciled by the activity of the Holy Spirit, working among ALL the Apostles. Opinions and differences may exist, but it is vital that we recognise that which *can* change and the things that *cannot*, and indeed *must not* change.

Conflicts that arise over the external and outward appearance of things have to be separated from that which is beneath the externals. Rather like a child – even a little one knows that however lovely the wrapping you have to open the box to see what the gift is inside, for that is what really matters.

So often we get sidetracked by the wrappings. Would our faith be enhanced, however beautiful our churches, perfect the flowers, superb our choirs, lovely our vestments, candles etc. if no-one in the church was willing to pray, change and live the Gospels. Now, the externals are important of course, but they must be a means by which we arrive at the 'truth' – the Word, and the Sacrament.

So it is with traditions: Traditions help us to feel familiar, at home, lead to order, and are a practical way of enabling people to congregate without chaos.

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By definition they can change because they are the 'trappings', not the essence.

Liturgy is there to uphold and make Truth transparent; otherwise it blinds us to the real message. There are many ways in which we hold on to the externals and never seek to look at what they try to reveal to us. Externals must always make the 'inward vision' clear.

The Epistle (Letter) of St. Paul to the Galatians says much of this. Similarly in his letter to the people of Corinth (*Letter 2, Ch 3 vs. 4-11*)...

"For such is the confidence that we have through Christ towards God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of the New Covenant; not in the written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the dispensation of death carved in letters of stone (The Ten Commandments) came with such splendour that the Israelites would not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, failing as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendour..."

For if what faded away came with splendour what is permanent must have much more splendour".

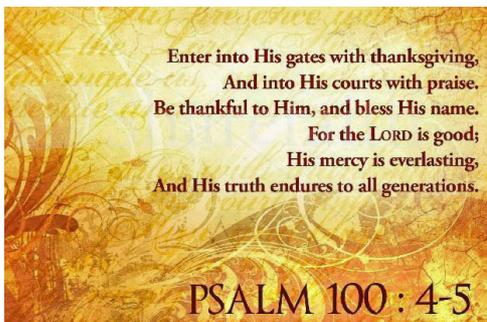


The Spirit lives to set us free. Free to love and serve. This is the Tradition that we hold onto and indeed is the reason and purpose of the many beautiful traditions that we hold dear, or alter for the sake of refreshment.

The Tradition of the Church contains the deposit of faith – the kernel, the essential element that makes us Christian and Christ-like. The Dogmas of the Church, the Scripture, the Sacraments, the Magisterium, teaching authority are not mere traditions or nice things to have but the utterly essential elements, the Truth of what God has revealed to us through Scripture. These cannot and will not change. The Spirit that guides the Church has also spoken through those who have ‘Authority’ to lead and guide and define the sacredness of the deposits of faith. Therefore things held over time become explicit and clear. Tradition can be handed down through the spoken, understood beliefs. But it is Traditio (Creed) that is the accepted fact that holds, not the trappings.

We must therefore be very certain, even in the very ordinary things that we are not holding onto the paper and refusing the beauty of the Gift. We must be open to how things are presented as much as we must never change the unchangeable –
...but understand the difference.

We must be open to the Spirit, but always aware of our human likes and dislikes and be charitable to those who do not share them and not confuse these with that ‘Breath of the Spirit’.
 Today we must be bold in our proclamation of that which belongs to God.



World Youth Day

From July 23rd – 28th in Rio de Janeiro the youth of the world will gather for the World Youth Day. This massive event was started by Blessed John Paul II in 1985 and has proved to be very successful. The last was held in Madrid, Spain. It aims to bring together young people to celebrate their common bond of faith and to learn more about it as well as rejoice in their being young and together. This year’s theme is ‘Go out and make disciples of all nations’ – fitting indeed for this Year of Faith. Brazil has the largest number of Catholics in the world and the event has been well planned to provide for all.
 It is anticipated that around two million young people will attend.

There are many special activities but the key is sound catechesis and there will be over 273 venues. There will also be much prayer, with availability of Sacraments, as well as teachings on moral issues of our time in an atmosphere of service and love. Pope Francis has already received his ‘kit’ for the event and expressed great enthusiasm for it is in his native Latin America.

Pope Benedict XVI, who attended the last one gave a special preparatory message and mission for the one in Rio.

“Many young people today seriously question whether life is something good, and have a hard time finding their way. More generally however, young people look at the difficulties of our world and ask themselves: Is there anything I can do? The light of faith illumines this darkness. It helps us to understand that every human life is priceless because each of us is the fruit of God’s love. God loves everyone, even those who have fallen away from Him, or disregard Him. God waits patiently. Dear friends, this invitation remains timely. We are passing through a very particular period of history. Technical advances have given us unprecedented possibilities for interaction between people and nations.”

Madrid 2012

He then draws attention to two modern ways of spreading the Gospel. He encourages all to use the internet wisely, avoiding the danger of it.

“...especially the risk of addiction, of confusing the real world with the virtual, and of replacing direct and personal encounters and dialogue with internet contacts.”

Then he also encouraged young people to spread the Gospel as they travelled to distant lands for work, pleasure or for migratory reasons.

Pope Francis will take part in various ways ranging from hearing Confessions, Prayer, Stations of the Cross on Copacabana Beach, visiting young offenders in Sts. Joachim and Anna’s Centre on ‘their’ Feast Day, as well as sharing meals with the young. HH

Let us pray that our young will be strengthened and awakened to believe and serve as missionaries of the Gospel. Amen

Feast days in July... Sts. Benedict 11th, Mary Magdalen 22nd, Bridget Patron of Europe 23rd, James the Apostle 25th, Anna and Joachim 26th, Ignatius of Loyola 31st.
 Pray for us!