



The Holy See

CLOSING MASS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD ON THE FAMILY AND BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD PAUL VI

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 19 October 2014*

Video

We have just heard one of the most famous phrases in the entire Gospel: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (*Mt 22:21*).

Goaded by the Pharisees who wanted, as it were, to give him an exam in religion and catch him in error, Jesus gives this ironic and brilliant reply. It is a striking phrase which the Lord has bequeathed to all those who experience qualms of conscience, particularly when their comfort, their wealth, their prestige, their power and their reputation are in question. This happens all the time; it always has.

Certainly Jesus puts the stress on the second part of the phrase: “and [render] to God the things that are God’s”. This calls for acknowledging and professing – in the face of any sort of power – that God alone is the Lord of mankind, that there is no other. This is the perennial newness to be discovered each day, and it requires mastering the fear which we often feel at God’s surprises.

God is not afraid of new things! That is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts and guiding us in unexpected ways. He renews us: he constantly makes us “new”. A Christian who lives the Gospel is “God’s newness” in the Church and in the world. How much God loves this “newness”!

“Rendering to God the things that are God’s” means being docile to his will, devoting our lives to

him and working for his kingdom of mercy, love and peace.

Here is where our true strength is found; here is the leaven which makes it grow and the salt which gives flavour to all our efforts to combat the prevalent pessimism which the world proposes to us. Here too is where our hope is found, for when we put our hope in God we are neither fleeing from reality nor seeking an alibi: instead, we are striving to render to God what is God's. That is why we Christians look to the future, God's future. It is so that we can live this life to the fullest – with our feet firmly planted on the ground – and respond courageously to whatever new challenges come our way.

In these days, during the [extraordinary Synod of Bishops](#), we have seen how true this is. “Synod” means “journeying together”. And indeed pastors and lay people from every part of the world have come to Rome, bringing the voice of their particular Churches in order to help today's families walk the path the Gospel with their gaze fixed on Jesus. It has been a great experience, in which we have lived *synodality* and *collegiality*, and felt the power of the Holy Spirit who constantly guides and renews the Church. For the Church is called to waste no time in seeking to bind up open wounds and to rekindle hope in so many people who have lost hope.

For the gift of this Synod and for the constructive spirit which everyone has shown, in union with the Apostle Paul “we give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers” (1 Th 1:2). May the Holy Spirit, who during these busy days has enabled us to work generously, in true freedom and humble creativity, continue to guide the journey which, in the Churches throughout the world, is bringing us to the Ordinary Synod of Bishops in October 2015. We have sown and we continued to sow, patiently and perseveringly, in the certainty that it is the Lord who gives growth to what we have sown (cf. 1 Cor 3:6).

On this day of the Beatification of Pope Paul VI, I think of the words with which he established the [Synod of Bishops](#): “by carefully surveying the signs of the times, we are making every effort to adapt ways and methods... to the growing needs of our time and the changing conditions of society” (Apostolic Letter Motu Proprio [Apostolica Sollicitudo](#)).

When we look to this great Pope, this courageous Christian, this tireless apostle, we cannot but say in the sight of God a word as simple as it is heartfelt and important: thanks! Thank you, our dear and beloved Pope Paul VI! Thank you for your humble and prophetic witness of love for Christ and his Church!

In his personal journal, the great helmsman of the Council wrote, at the conclusion of its final session: “Perhaps the Lord has called me and preserved me for this service not because I am particularly fit for it, or so that I can govern and rescue the Church from her present difficulties, but so that I can suffer something for the Church, and in that way it will be clear that he, and no other, is her guide and saviour” (P. Macchi, *Paolo VI nella sua parola*, Brescia, 2001, pp. 120-121). In

this humility the grandeur of Blessed Paul VI shines forth: before the advent of a secularized and hostile society, he could hold fast, with farsightedness and wisdom – and at times alone – to the helm of the barque of Peter, while never losing his joy and his trust in the Lord.

Paul VI truly “rendered to God what is God’s” by devoting his whole life to the “sacred, solemn and grave task of continuing in history and extending on earth the mission of Christ” ([Homily for the Rite of Coronation](#): *Insegnamenti I*, (1963), 26), loving the Church and leading her so that she might be “a loving mother of the whole human family and at the same time the minister of its salvation” (Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, Prologue).