

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and my sons for me!

The celebration of the Synod of Bishops is naturally giving rise to a variety of news stories and comments in some of the media. Besides praying for this event in the Church, as I already invited you to do in my previous message, I now want to briefly suggest a few points that we can reflect on regarding the divine and human reality of the Church.

Before other considerations, I would like to begin by reminding you, with words of our Father, that “this is what the Church is: Christ present among us, God coming towards mankind in order to save us, calling us with his revelation, sanctifying us with his grace, sustaining us with his constant help, in the great and small battles of our daily life” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 131). Given this identity of Christ with the Church, we can understand the well-known and forceful statement of Saint Cyprian: “No one can have God as their Father if they don’t have the Church as their Mother” (*On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, 6).

The Church is Christ and so are the men and women incorporated into Christ by Baptism; and in this human element, along with so much holiness, many manifestations of human weakness are also present. But this weakness – our own and that of others – should not diminish the strength of our faith when professing “*unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.*”

Our love for the Work is necessarily linked to our love for the Church. Our Father, with a Catholic, universal outlook, tells us: “My children, we cannot look only at the Work: we look first and always at the holy Church” (*Letter 14-IX-1951*, no. 27).

Saint Augustine said that “the Church is the reconciled world” (*Sermon 96*, no. 8). That is, it develops by reconciling the world with God. That is the great apostolic mission of everyone in the Church, in a marvelous unity amid the diversity of so many institutions and initiatives. Reconciling the world with God entails bringing peace to this world, so afflicted by divisions and wars, such as the current one between Ukraine and Russia, and the most recent one in the Holy Land. Let us remain closely united with the entire Church in our petition for peace which, of course, was very present in my prayer at Fatima on October 5th. Specifically, let us unite ourselves generously to the day of prayer, fasting and penance convoked by Pope Francis for the upcoming 27th of October.

And don’t stop praying also for the ongoing review of the Statutes of the Work, as I asked you in my September message.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leonardo".

Rome, 21 October 2023