

***Twenty-Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time  
Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost (Latin Mass)  
October 2, 2022  
Year of Saint Joseph***

*“Thinking, on the contrary, is a difficult task; it is the hardest work a man can do — that is perhaps why so few indulge in it.”*

*(Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, Old Errors and New Labels p.1)*

In mid-September the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released the *National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Diocesan Phase of the 2021-2023 Synod: For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*. This 16-page document is a culmination of almost a year long process to both listen and discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in the voice of the laity. Of the roughly 66.8 million Catholics in the U.S., around 700,000 lay members participated. As I read through the report, two statements were made which I found rather depressing. They are: *“People noted that the Church seems to prioritize doctrine over people, rules, and regulations over lived reality. People want the Church to be a home for the wounded and broken, not an institution for the perfect. They want the Church to meet people where they are, wherever they are, and walk with them rather than judging them; to build real relationships through care and authenticity, not superiority.”* (pp. 7-8)

I stated I found these lines rather depressing. What guidance are they asking the Holy Spirit through the Catholic Church to provide? Might I offer an answer from the last sentences which concluded this report? *“Listening brings forth the impetus toward healing our enduring wounds, and enhancing our healthy communion and participation, which is vital for living out our mission. This synthesis, as well as the syntheses generated on the local level, are an invitation to ongoing attentive listening, respectful encounter, and prayerful discernment.”* (p. 13)

The People of God want the Catholic Church to be a listening, accompanying organization. Due to the rapid polarization of various groups, one could rightly understand some who no longer want controversial topics aired in their churches. Personally, I can very much understand this sentiment. I too am tired of the commercials and commentaries on television. I am tired of the changes to our language. Words, once used, are not now used because they can be deemed as “micro-aggressions”. Holding different beliefs and ideas will have you labeled in society as a hate filled (and so many other names I choose not to list) person. All of these things lead one to either stop speaking out loud, or to give into whatever the main group supports this day. In either instance, we choose to remain silent.

Do you think this is the Catholicism our ancestors shed their blood for? Is it a Catholicism that listens and accompanies rather than one which thinks and defines? Or, is it a Catholicism which remains silent in the face of a depraved moral laxity being promoted by a perverted culture who “critics” often gush over both the ideas and the individuals promoting these ideas as “brave, truthful, role models?” No, our ancestors shed their blood for a Catholicism which inspired her children to become intellectuals and cultural movers. Next week, I will explain what I mean and how this will apply to we few here today.