

The Pastor's Column - August 31st, 2023



Todos, Todos, Todos.

That means: "Everyone, Everyone, Everyone." This was the call Pope Francis directed to the 1.5 million gathered at World Youth Day held in Lisbon Portugal a few weeks ago. Who is welcome in the Church, he asked? EVERYONE! EVERYONE! EVERYONE! The crowd repeated.

During the World Youth Day events, according to a recent National Catholic Reporter article, Pope Francis visited his brother Jesuits in Portugal, reiterated this grand message of inclusion and admonished those resistant to change.

"The door is open to everyone, everyone has their own space in the church," said Francis. "How will each person live it? We help people live so that they can occupy that place with maturity, and this applies to all kinds of people."

When asked specifically, Francis affirmed the inclusion of LGBTQ persons and transgender people in particular, adding:

"What I don't like at all, in general, is that we look at the so-called 'sin of the flesh' with a magnifying glass," said Francis. "If you exploited workers, if you lied or cheated, it didn't matter, and instead relevant were the sins below the waist."

"We must not be superficial and naïve, forcing people into things and behaviors for which they are not yet mature, or are not capable," Francis said. "To accompany people spiritually and pastorally takes a lot of sensitivity and creativity."

At the heart of this is the tug of war within the Church over the moral teachings of the Church and whether they can change with time. No doubt, this will come up during the "Synod on Synodality" in October at the Vatican where the church will grapple with the feedback of Catholics from around the world, many of whom desire change. Pope Francis is aware of this as well as the resistance to it, much of which comes from the United States. The Pope had some choice words for us:

"The situation in the United States is not easy: There is a very strong, reactionary attitude. It is organized and shapes the way people belong, even emotionally," said the pope. "I want to remind these people that backwardism is useless, and it is necessary to understand that there is a correct evolution in the understanding of questions of faith and morals."


"Those American groups of which you speak, so closed, are isolating themselves. And instead of living by doctrine, by the true doctrine that always develops and bears fruit, they live by ideologies," he added. "But when you abandon doctrine in life to replace it with an ideology, you have lost, you have lost as in war."

Depending on your point of view, the Pope's observations are either refreshing or frightening. Either way, the Pope is correct: the moral teaching of the Church is not static nor monolithic but dynamic. It changes and grows as we as a Church deepen our understanding of God's creation and God's Word. Think of slavery, capital punishment, atomic weapons, interracial marriage; the church's teaching on all of these have changed over time as our understanding and awareness changed.

God Bless the Pope, at age 86, for his inclusive embrace and for being attentive to the signs of the times. May we have a heart as open as his! Let us hear the call to be open to the Holy Spirit, to be like Christ in our outreach and care of our brothers and sisters, and to do everything we can to make sure that our doors are open and welcoming to everyone, everyone, everyone....

Blessing to you all this Labor Day Weekend!

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Eric". The letters are fluid and connected, with a small dot above the 'i' in "Eric".

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