

VATICAN CITY, Oct. 5, 2018 – After arriving in the Eternal City around midday on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi (Oct. 4), I am now winding down my first full day in Rome covering the [Synod](#) on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment. This is my inaugural visit to the city sanctified by the blood of so many martyrs – most notably, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul – and I must say that Rome is truly a sight to behold.

Beauty, Order, and Permanence

Encountering St. Peter's Square and Basilica for the first time yesterday evening was quite breathtaking. I was immediately struck by both the magnitude of the structures as well as their graceful beauty.



In the midst of the present “passion of the Church” ([Benedict XVI, May 11, 2010](#)), I found myself filled with a sense of peace while gazing upon the most iconic Church in Christendom, so well proportioned and ordered. For peace, as St. Augustine tells us, is “the tranquility of order” ([City of God, Book XIX, Ch. 13](#)).

This experience also brought to mind the following verses from St. Peter’s first Epistle:

“Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore it is said in the Scripture: Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious. And he that shall believe in Him, shall not be confounded.” (1 Pet. 2:5-6)

And also, of course, the famous words of Our Lord found in St. Matthew’s Gospel:

“And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:18)



Delivery of the Keys by Pietro Perugino (c. 1481-1482), located in the Sistine Chapel.

At a time when many in the Church are tempted to believe that the gates of hell *are* prevailing, or even *have prevailed* (see [here](#) for help), St. Peter's Basilica is a powerful reminder of the indefectibility – that is, the *permanence* – of Holy Mother Church, built as she is “upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). No matter how corrupt the human element of the Church becomes, including the hierarchy, Our Lord will never allow the *beauty, order, and permanence* of His Mystical Body to be completely destroyed.

Beauty, order, and permanence. These are things for which we all long, and they are particularly important for us to have during our formative years. How tragic it is that so many children today are deprived of them, not only by their parents (especially through divorce and “remarriage”), but also by the many false shepherds who fail to nourish the flock of Christ with sound doctrine and a holy example. Will the Synod Fathers address this crucial need?

Are Youthful Wants or Needs the Priority?

Thus far, it seems that “listening” to the youth has been one of the dominant themes. Vatican News [reported](#) earlier today:

“The theme of listening was an important part of the morning assembly. The Synod Fathers heard of the need to listen to young people in the digital world, where an overabundance of information corresponds to a dearth of dreams, with the risk of creating ‘info-obese’ children. ...

Young people, they heard, want to have an adult who will listen to them, dedicate their time to them, welcome them with empathy and respect, accompany them in their discernment—even with regard to their vocation—and not judge them. This need is even greater today, given the attitude of some adults towards young people, which can leave youths disoriented, without a stable point of reference.”

As a father myself, I agree that listening to young people – to their thoughts, feelings, joys, sorrows, hopes, fears – is very important. It is a way of demonstrating care and concern for their well-being. At the same time, however, I know that as a father my job is to give my children what they *need*, and not always what they *want*. And every parent knows that oftentimes children want things that are not good for them (the same is true, of course, for

us adults).

One thing that all people *need*, whether they want it or not, is the unadulterated Truth of God. So many young people today are in desperate need of Truth, of instruction in such elementary truths of Faith as Creation, Original Sin and its consequences for human nature, our resultant need for salvation, the unique Person and mission of Our Lord – Who “came into this world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15) – and the impossibility of being saved outside of Christ and His Church. These basic truths of Faith form the “stable point of reference” that *all* people, young and old, need as an anchor in this life. Without them, we are doomed to be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14).

Young People Need Traditional Liturgy

One very concrete way (as “concrete” seems to be a popular ecclesial term these days) to introduce young Catholics to *beauty, order, and permanence* is through exposure to the traditional Latin Mass. During the official press briefing this afternoon, the topic of liturgy was mentioned by a few members of the panel. As such, I posed a question – in particular, to [Archbishop Anthony Fisher](#) of Sydney, Australia – about the importance of beautiful, reverent liturgy and whether or not a wider access to the traditional rite of Mass has been discussed by the Synod Fathers.



Archbishop Anthony Fisher, center, responding to my question.

In response, Archbishop Fisher explained that young people tend to be as “diverse” in their liturgical tastes as adults – for example, some like a more “Pentecostal” style, as he put it, while others prefer Gregorian chant. Although he recognized the importance of beauty in the liturgy, he ultimately seemed to indicate that liturgical beauty comes in many different forms and should not be identified exclusively with those that are rooted in Tradition. Once again, it appears that youthful *wants* are taking precedence over youthful *needs*.

The Church’s Greatest Need

Perhaps the greatest need of all in our day is for God to give us “pastors according to [His] own Heart” who “shall feed [us] with knowledge and doctrine” (Jer. 3:15). May this be our fervent prayer throughout the current synod and beyond. And let us take seriously the call of Our Lady of Fatima, which She impressed so deeply upon the three little shepherds, to [pray much for the Holy Father](#), that he will be given the graces he needs to fulfill his duties as he should.

UPDATE (10/6/2018): Today, it was brought to my attention that my question to Archbishop Fisher concerning the Traditional Latin Mass generated some interest on [Twitter](#):

A journalist asked a follow-up question, stating he is a young man who discovered the Extraordinary Form, and that where he is from “there is very much a draw to Traditional Liturgy by young people.” “Could it be a tool to draw young people to an encounter with Christ? [#Synod2018](#) pic.twitter.com/aK1CgR9DZY

— Catholic Sat (@CatholicSat) [October 5, 2018](#)

Here is Archbishop Fisher’s answer (in two parts):

And here is Archbishop [@AnthonyFisherOP](#) response to the question of whether “The Extraordinary Form could be utilized as a tool to draw young people to an encounter with Christ?” [#Synod2018](#) [Part 2] pic.twitter.com/I8Ls4IxZSE

— Catholic Sat (@CatholicSat) [October 5, 2018](#)