

## Lithuania Priests

### Talk Seven

#### Scandals and the Healing/Renewal of the Church: Towards a Humble, Servant Church

Pope Francis: Emphasis on Servant Church, on a Church that is Humble. We are accustomed to think that each Christian must be humble, particularly priests and religious, but we have not been accustomed to think this way about the Church: the need for a humble Church.

Pope refuses to have elevated throne. Refusing trappings of papal monarchy. Described himself first as bishop of Rome. Talks of “walking with”. Shepherd in midst of flock (odour of sheep), not just over.

Difference from 1958 and 2005. Elected in middle of scandals. Vatileaks (300 page report from 3 Cardinals). You don't need 300 pages to say how some confidential documents were leaked. Malfunctioning in Vatican. Clear desire of Cardinals for reform, for a cleansing of the house. Background in the Church of child abuse. One Cardinal not at conclave because he admitted to inappropriate sexual behavior. Irish Church (letter of Benedict XVI to people of Ireland). Society of St Pius X fiasco (Williamson Holocaust-denier).

John Paul II had courage to call for Catholic confession of the sins of the past: esp sins against unity; and sins of violence in the name of truth. Cardinals, 1993. TMI, 1994. March, 2000 penitential liturgy.

Astonishing honesty in the Scriptures, a hallmark of Israel. Story with great heroes of faith (Abraham, Moses, David) but no hiding of their sins. Unique in historical literature. More disobedience in OT than obedience: but through the obedient believing remnant will come salvation and the fulfillment of the promises to all Israel. Promises and threats given together (Lev. 26; Deut 28). Leads to deportment before God: on the one hand praise, on the other hand lamentation. On the one hand: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles; on the other hand, Yom Kippour. Same pattern reflected in Rev. 2 – 3 for churches of Asia Minor.

People have said Church took over blessings from Israel and left the Jews with the curses. How different are we from Israel? Certainly the Church embraced Passover and Pentecost. But do we need a Yom Kippour? Penitential rite in the liturgy. Kyrie eleison. Advent and Lent as penitential seasons, but in many places they have become very individualistic: the nearest we come to corporate confession before God is in the reproaches in the Good Friday liturgy, when we are challenged by the Lord: “My people, what have I done to you? Or how have I grieved you? Answer me! Because I led you out of the land of Egypt, you have prepared a Cross for your Saviour.” The reproaches are clearly addressed to the Church with the words reproaching Israel.

Church that is self-referential becomes sick. Honesty of Pope Francis. This is part of Renewal needed. In child abuse scandals, people were scandalized not so much by hearing of misbehavior of priests, but by finding out that bishops had told lies to the public. Renewal means abandoning the triumphalist Church to become a humble Church.

Triumphalist church hid the dirt and even at times denied it. The history of the Church is a history of glory and of shame, in every century. But these two are not on the same level.

Triumphalist church corresponds to Pope Francis' self-referential Church. Without confessing our sins and weaknesses, even corporately as God's people, we can hardly avoid triumphalism. With this easily goes a dishonesty that denies or minimizes things that are wrong and scandalous. The humble Church gives continuous thanks and praise to God for the glories, always confesses its total need of God's grace and dependence on God, and when necessary confesses what has been wrong and has dishonoured the Lord and the name of Jesus. When we do this, the real glories of the Church which are huge stand out in their purity and wonder.

Can we come before God as Church community and truly confess our needs? Lord, we do not know how to evangelize our young people; Lord, we do not know your Scriptures as we should; Lord, much of our preaching is weak. Lord, many of our priorities are not in your order.

Pope Francis' prayer to Mary given to Italian bishops conference:

"Mother of silence, who watches over the mystery of God,

Save us from the idolatry of the present time, to which those who forget are condemned.

**Purify the eyes of Pastors with the eye-wash of memory:**

**Take us back to the freshness of the origins, for a prayerful, penitent Church.**

Mother of the beauty that blossoms from faithfulness to daily work,

Lift us from the torpor of laziness, pettiness, and defeatism.

**Clothe Pastors in the compassion that unifies, that makes whole; let us discover the joy of a humble, brotherly, serving Church.**

Mother of tenderness who envelops us in patience and mercy,

Help us burn away the sadness, impatience and rigidity of those who do not know what it means to belong.

Intercede with your Son to obtain that our hands, our feet, our hearts be agile: let us build the Church with the Truth of love.

Mother, we shall be the People of God, pilgrims bound for the Kingdom. Amen." (May 23).

Pope Francis prayed this prayer with the Italian Bishops Conference.