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A large, majestic tree, full of wisdom and light, reaches for the sky. A sign of deep vitality and hope which expresses the cross of Christ. It carries the Eucharist, which shines like the sun. The horizontal branches, opened like hands or wings, suggest, at the same time, the Holy Spirit.

The people of God are not static: they are on the move, in direct reference to the etymology of the word synod, which means "walking together". The people are united by the same common dynamic that this Tree of Life breathes into them, from which they begin their walk.

These 15 silhouettes sum up our entire humanity in its diversity of life situations of generations and origins. This aspect is reinforced by the multiplicity of bright colours which are themselves signs of joy. There is no hierarchy between these people who are all on the same footing: young, old, men, women, teenagers, children, lay people, religious, parents, couples, singles; the bishop and the nun are not in front of them, but among them. Quite naturally, children and then adolescents open their walk, in reference to these words of Jesus in the Gospel: " I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children". (Mt 11:25)

The horizontal baseline: "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission" runs from left to right in the direction of this march, underlining and strengthening it, to end with the title "Synod 2021 - 2023", the high point that synthesizes the whole.

THE KEEPER OF THE CLOCK

As we wind down the liturgical calendar year and look forward to Advent in a couple of weeks, we are invited to be mindful of time. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus reminds His followers that things will pass away, and no one knows the day or the hour. He goes on to say that even the angels don't know. The vision of the end of the world has been a constant for the creative minds of Hollywood and writers of science fiction. There is a fascination as to what it is going to look like and how it will be played out. Jesus speaks of stars falling from the sky and the powers in the heavens being shaken.

I am not sure many of us live with the expectation that the world is going to end in our lifetime. We prepare calendars, make plans long-term and short-term. As we get older, we begin to research our retirement plans asking ourselves, do we have enough to survive? Most of this is rooted in the things of this earth and of this world. Jesus gives us an insight as to what will remain. He states "heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." His divine Word will not pass away. How do we hold on to His Word? A long time ago, I lived with one of the legends of our diocese, Fr. Vytas Memenas. He would often say, "We are not the keeper of the clock." To live in the expectation that every day is to be lived to the fullest and it might be your last is not the morning meditation of most. Yet, when we gaze into the chasm of the Almighty and lift our hearts to a different realm, we can find peace. One of the great realities to me is the gift of the Eucharist. At the liturgy, I have the unimaginable and humbling experience to touch our Savior and gaze into this miraculous Body of Christ that I hold up before all of you. In that moment, nothing else matters. As I gaze upon God, my mind goes to the Hebrew word, Baraka. I enter most deeply into blessing. I can get lost in the moment and sometimes do on great days. I also get tempted and bombarded at that moment to become distracted and lose the gaze given to me as a gift. All those distractions come from this world. Moments are to become timeless. I get grounded in the Eucharistic Prayer and at the Consecration. I am most away from time then. We must find our moments to be free of the things of this world and to just trust.

Next week we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. It is the conclusion of the liturgical year. Everything leads to our renewed proclamation that Jesus Christ is King. Our faith journey of this past year is to be presented next week to this King and no other. May we prepare wisely and recall the moments when the loss of the perspective of time became the doorway to the timelessness of our God.



Fr. John