

**For The Bulletin Of
September 20, 2015**

**THE 25TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME**

From Father Robert

Jesus is so patient with the disciples. Having asked them the question about His own identity, He teaches them about what “the Christ” really means. But the disciples don’t get it. In this Sunday’s gospel Jesus for a second time predicts His passion and death. The disciples still don’t get it! The “wicked” in the first reading try the patience of the “just one.” It seems as though the disciples in the gospel are also trying the patience of the “just one.”

We humans test God and each other all the time; our transgressions are all too evident in the world around us. It is as though we are like those wicked folks in the first reading – we push and push to see how far we can go. Undaunted, God does “take care of” us, but not in the way we think. God did not spare the Son from “revilement and torture”; God delivered Him by raising Him from death. The same is true for Jesus’ disciples. We will be tested and God will care for us, too. But along the way we can expect others to revile us as well. Being a disciple means that we will be obnoxious to some people (those for whom transgression is a way of life). This is the risk of discipleship.

Jesus uses the model of a little child to illustrate His point. Children are innocent and without pretensions. They naturally embody what “least of all” means. This also illustrates to what extent the disciple is to become the

“servant of all” by receiving even the “least of all.” The total self-emptying that enables one to receive the “least of all” describes the disciple. This is how we receive Jesus – by receiving the least. No one is insignificant. Everyone is worth dying for.

The scandal of this gospel is that Jesus, the leader and teacher of the disciples, will be reduced to the last when He is handed over and dies. How do the disciples react to this scandalous teaching? They argue among themselves about who is the greatest! Jesus rightly reduces them to silence. The disciples do not understand greatest and least, first and last, servant of all. They do not understand that Jesus’ own death is a call to die to self, to choose to become the greatest by being the least. Confronted with this saving mystery, we ought to all be reduced to silence – but now for the right reason.

Living The Paschal Mystery

How and when does Jesus reduce us to silence? This is a good question that each of us ought to ponder seriously and at length. We are reduced to silence when Jesus teaches us what we do not want to hear because we will need to change our way of life. Being least and servant of all goes against the grain of all of us. Yet, this is the only way to share in Jesus’ risen life.

No wonder Jesus focused His time on the journey to Jerusalem on His disciples – this teaching is so hard to hear! No wonder the disciples do not understand – this teaching is so hard to accept! We are no different from the disciples. How often do we fail to come to Jesus to question Him so that we can understand the cost of discipleship? How often do

we fail to take time to be with Him in silence, to listen to Him? We are afraid to question Jesus about discipleship when we choose the easy way which is not discipleship: when we ignore the plea of others for help; when we only spend time with people in our own inner circle; when we harbor racial, sexual, or religious prejudices; when we...

Having heard today's scriptures and the preaching of Fr. Griener, how have they touched your heart and life?

- I find myself clamoring for status when...At these times Jesus challenges me to be servant by...
- I am "the least" when...I am the greatest when...
- I am reduced to silence when...

About Liturgy: Communion and Greatness

In today's gospel the disciples are arguing about "who was the greatest" and Jesus teaches them that true discipleship consists in becoming "the last of all." The dynamic is from greatest to least. It is interesting that in the Communion Rite exactly the opposite dynamic happens: we go from least to greatest.

At the invitation of the presider to begin the Communion Procession, we respond with "Lord, I am not worthy..." Before coming to the messianic table to participate in the Lord's feast we declare that we are the least among God's people. Then we come to the table and share in the feast and, indeed, become the greatest because we eat the Body and Blood and become what we eat – the Body of Christ.

The biblical source for this familiar liturgical text is Matthew 8:8, where the

Capernaum centurion approaches Jesus and asks Him to heal His servant. When Jesus answers that He will come, the servant replies, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only the word." Jesus' word is a substitution for the visit – Lord, don't come; You only have to give the word. At Communion these words are an invitation to Jesus to visit us, now in the most wondrous gift of His Body and Blood. In addition to a confession of humility, these words we speak just before Communion are also an expression of confidence that our Lord will come to us – to nourish us, heal us, strengthen us, save us, and transform us.

Catechetical Sunday

At each liturgy this weekend, we are commissioning the catechists of our parish who will share our faith with adults and children. We thank God that each one of them has said "yes!" to the invitation to serve, to teach, to help us understand more deeply our faith and what it means to be disciples of Jesus. We are also grateful to **Frances Rojek, Director of Faith Formation**, for all she does to train, schedule, and support our catechists in their ministry.

Liturgical Ministry Faire

This weekend we once again have our Liturgical Ministry Faire. Representatives from each ministry will be present in the Gathering Plaza following each liturgy to offer information about each ministry as well as to answer questions and facilitate your signing up to participate. Thank you to all who are "veterans" in ministry and thank you to all those who are hearing the Lord's call and offering themselves in service to our community through our liturgical ministries.

The San Francisco Chapter of the American Guild of Organists Installation

For many years, I have had the honor to serve as the Chaplain for the San Francisco Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. The Guild is a world-wide organization of professional organists and choir directors, numbering more than 12,000 individuals. This afternoon at 5:00 p.m. I will preside for Evensong that opens the Guild Year 2015-2016 and install its officers at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Francisco. Music for the service will include new settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by **Steven Ketterer, Director of Music for St. Luke's**. Following the service, there will be a reception in the church hall.

The Arrival of Francis, Bishop of Rome

This coming Tuesday is an historic event for us as **Francis, Bishop of Rome**, arrives in the United States. We, along with all Catholic Churches, have been asked to ring our bells for ten minutes as he arrives on American soil. Our O'Connor Memorial Carillon will peal beginning at 1:00 p.m./4:00 p.m. ET as the plane carrying our Holy Father touches down in Washington, D.C. I hope you will be able to watch the television coverage of each of the events during the time that he is here with us. It is truly a special time of blessing and grace.

Carolyn Krantz Welcomed To Pastoral Staff

I am very pleased to share with you that **Carolyn Krantz, M.Div.**, is becoming our second Pastoral Associate and will work in the area of Social Justice Education and Advocacy.

Carolyn brings a wonderful background as a Pastoral Associate from her many years in that position at our neighboring parish of St. Peter Martyr in Pittsburg.

She also was an employee of Catholic Charities of the East Bay and most recently, has been offering various classes for us here at St. Ignatius of Antioch.

She worships regularly with us at our Sunday 8:00 a.m. Eucharist. Like **Peter Degl'Innocenti**, she will work without receiving a salary and is donating her time to facilitate our parish's involvement with the many social justice issues that are before us. Please join me in welcoming Carolyn to the Staff!

Adult Faith Formation – “The Rites to Die Right!”

Once again, I will be presenting an Adult Faith Formation program/seminar on “The Rites to Die Right.” It will take place on Wednesday evening, September 23rd, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. in the parish hall. There is no cost to attend.

The session will focus on the church's pastoral care of the sick, it's presence at the time of death, related rites, and the three principal movements of the Order of Christian Funerals: The Vigil, Funeral Liturgy, and Committal. Issues around cremation and disposition will also be addressed. You will not want to miss this informative and entertaining workshop.

For those of you who may not be aware, I am also a Licensed Funeral Director in the State of California, License No. #1598, and am able to bring a unique perspective to the issue of selecting a

mortuary/funeral home/cremation society to serve you at the time of the death of a loved one. Please mark your calendars accordingly and plan to attend.

Our Concert Series

In my Insert last week, I shared with you that the next in the series of Concerts is a program for Organ and Brass. The original date for this concert was September 18th, however it has been postponed until Friday, November 13th. Please mark your calendars accordingly and plan to attend. This is going to be a stunning performance and you will not want to miss it. A reception will follow in the parish hall.

The Feast of San Lorenzo Ruiz

Our Filipino Community will celebrate the Feast of San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila at the 10:00 a.m. Eucharist next Sunday, September 27th. Members of the Filipino Community will participate in the various liturgical ministries, including Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, and Altar Servers. Following the liturgy, a light reception will take place in the parish hall. Please plan on joining us as we honor the first canonized saint of the Philippines.

Blessing of the Animals

On Sunday, October 4th, The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, we will once again have the Blessing of the Animals following the 10:00 a.m. Eucharist. The Blessing will take place in the parish tent. Animals may be either leashed or in carriers.

Five things to look for during the papal visit

[Thomas Reese](#) |

The pope's visit to the United States is going to be a whirlwind affair with scores of events and activities. In the midst of this papal storm, here are five things to focus on.

First, Francis the man.

This will be America's first opportunity to see the pope up-close and personal. He is going to be treated like a rock star, but he is no ordinary celebrity. What people will notice is that, for the pope, the visit is not all about himself. It is about the Gospel message of God's love and compassion and our responsibility to respond to that love by loving our brothers and sisters, especially the poor. In other words, he is not selling himself; he is selling the Gospel message of Jesus.

Americans are not used to humble celebrities; the phrase is an oxymoron. But for Pope Francis, it is all about others.

So the first thing to watch for is the pope's interaction with people, especially the sick, the poor and the marginalized. This pope preaches not only with words, but with actions. I am willing to go out on a limb and predict that his poll ratings will be up after the visit because even those who disagree with him like and respect him.

Second, Francis the prophet.

A prophet is someone who comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable. He speaks truth to power.

As archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he once told a church full of politicians and government officials on a civic holiday that they should put aside corruption and take care of the poor. They were so angry that they did not come back the following year but found a more hospitable church for their celebration.

Everyone is looking forward to what the pope will say to a [joint session of Congress](#) Sept. 24. Will he urge them to care for the poor, welcome the immigrant, work for peace, protect the environment, and cherish life?

His documents [Evangelii Gaudium](#) and [“Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home”](#) are hard-hitting attacks on libertarian capitalism, globalization, and a consumer-based economy. Simply quoting himself would be a striking message to Congress that would upset many comfortable people who like the status quo.

Third, Francis the peacemaker.

Ever since Pope Paul VI [spoke to the United Nations in 1965](#), it has become a tradition for popes to make a substantive address at the U.N. This is an opportunity for the pope to lay out his international agenda, to call for peace and reconciliation among peoples. Francis has already shown himself to be a consummate diplomat by mid-wiving an agreement between Cuba and the United States that has restored diplomatic relations.

It will be interesting to hear what he has to say about Cuban-U.S. relations while he is in Cuba before flying to the United States. Could the Castro regime be smart enough to put some high-profile political prisoners on the pope’s plane? This would reduce congressional opposition to repealing economic sanctions and shield Cuba from appearing to cave in to American pressure.

Papal addresses to the United Nations traditionally focus on peace and development, but Sept. 25, Francis will undoubtedly add a plea for the environment, in line with his encyclical [‘Laudato Si’](#). He knows that tough negotiations are ahead at the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Paris at the end of the year.

He will remind the world that it is facing a global crisis of apocalyptic dimensions, and all nations must make sacrifices for the common good. For the pope, this is a moral issue because it will affect the lives of people, especially the poor. He will also speak about refugees and religious freedom.

Fourth, Francis the pastor.

The pope is coming not just to talk to government officials and the United Nations. He is also coming to inspire the Catholic faithful and their bishops. He comes to preach and break bread with them.

His meeting with the American bishops in Washington on Sept. 23 will be especially interesting. Many people complain that the Francis revolution is not succeeding in the United States because many of the bishops and clergy are not onboard. They just don’t get it. What will he say to them?

For a [preview](#), one might look at what Francis said to the bishops in Brazil when he visited there.

In his [July 27, 2014, address to the Brazilian bishops](#) and his [address the next day to the Latin American Episcopal Conference](#), Francis set forth his ecclesiology, his pastoral priorities for the church. He talked of training ministers who could warm people's hearts, of being a church of mercy and forgiveness, of empowering women in the church, of developing a proactive mindset, and of empowering the laity to share in the church's mission.

Do we give the laity, he asked, "the freedom to continue discerning, in a way befitting their growth as disciples, the mission which the Lord has entrusted to them? Do we support them and accompany them, overcoming the temptation to manipulate them or infantilize them?"

Finally, Francis on message.

Many people are going to try to manipulate the pope's visit for their own agendas. Democrats and Republicans, environmentalists and pro-life activists, bishops and victims of abuse are all going to say that their issues are the most important. Spin doctors will pontificate; critics will say he doesn't know what he is talking about.

The inevitable goofs and stumbles of any major visit will take attention away from his message, but Francis has shown a remarkable ability to stay on message despite the circus that surrounds him.

He will focus on God's compassion and love, and on our responsibility to love one another.

His priorities are helping the poor, protecting the environment, and bringing peace to a troubled world.

Some people will find this teaching hard and "no longer walk with him" (John 6:66). This should not surprise us. The teachings of Jesus met opposition and created controversy. Being true to the Gospel will also make Francis controversial, but that will not stop him from fulfilling his prophetic and pastoral mission.

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Saving the environment through dialogue and transparency

[Thomas Reese](#) | Sept. 10, 2015

The world will continue on "the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us," says Pope Francis, unless everyone works together to find solutions to the environmental crisis through dialogue and transparency. This dialogue must occur on the local, national and international level, and should include people from business, politics, science, religion and the environmental movements, as well as ordinary people who lives will be affected.

In the first four chapters of his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reviews what scientists tell us is happening to the environment, reflects on what the Bible tells

us about creation, and points his finger at greed and a consumption-based economy as the causes of the environmental crisis. In chapter 5, he discusses how we should respond to the crisis.

Francis is the first to admit that the church does not have concrete solutions to the crisis facing the world. “The Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics,” he writes. “But I am concerned to encourage an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good.”

Francis believes that “interdependence obliges us to think of *one world with a common plan*” (his emphasis). He is not impressed by the global efforts so far. Pope Francis acknowledges that the world community has made progress through the Basel Convention on hazardous wastes, the Convention on international trade in endangered species, and the Vienna Convention on protecting the ozone layer.

But the international community has made little progress in protecting biodiversity, stopping desertification, or reducing greenhouse gasses because of a “lack of political will.” What agreements have been made “have been poorly implemented.” Enforceable international agreements and global regulatory norms are needed that “impose obligations and prevent unacceptable actions.”

He calls for the development of a global consensus that would lead “to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water.”

Specifically, he says that “technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser

degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay.”

He complains that some strategies for lowering greenhouse gases would risk imposing the costs on countries with few resources. Rather, he quotes the Bolivian bishops, “the countries which have benefited from a high degree of industrialization, at the cost of enormous emissions of greenhouse gases, have a greater responsibility for providing a solution to the problems they have caused.” These countries in fact owe a “carbon debt” to the rest of the world.

Francis singles out one solution for criticism in his encyclical -- carbon credits, whereby business could buy the right to pollute from companies that have reduced pollution levels in excess of what is required by law. Francis believes that this could “lead to a new form of speculation which would not help reduce the emission of polluting gases worldwide.” I think he is correct, but this is clearly a prudential judgment about which people could disagree.

Francis argues that poor nations need help through the technology transfer, technical assistance and financial resources. But they also have to work to eliminate extreme poverty and promote social development of their people. They “need to acknowledge the scandalous level of consumption in some privileged sectors of their population and to combat corruption more effectively.”

In fact, Francis believes that “the same mindset which stands in the way of making radical decisions to reverse the trend of global warming also stands in the way of achieving the goal of eliminating poverty.” He observes that the power of nation states has been weakened and “the economic and financial sectors, being transnational, tends to prevail over the political.”

Francis agrees with Pope Benedict who wrote in *Caritas in Veritate* that there is need for a world political order “to manage

the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration.” Such a world authority would be anathema to many Americans who see even a weak United Nations as a threat to U.S. sovereignty.

But Francis does not put all the onus on a world authority; he calls for greater attention to the environment by local and national authorities which have a “responsibility for planning, coordination, oversight and enforcement within their respective borders.” This would include setting down “rules for admissible conduct in the light of the common good.”

The problem he sees is that politics is “concerned with immediate results” and “is driven to produce short-term growth.” Politicians are “are reluctant to upset the public with measures which could affect the level of consumption or create risks for foreign investment.” Plus there is the problem of corruption.

Francis is a fan of cooperatives because “they are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land. They are also concerned about what they will eventually leave to their children and grandchildren.” He sees this mentality especially in indigenous peoples.

Francis acknowledges that there is “no uniform recipes” that will fit the needs of all countries or regions, but he believes all should promote energy conservation and maximum energy efficiency. This might involve “removing from the market products which are less energy efficient or more polluting, improving transport systems, and encouraging the construction and repair of

buildings aimed at reducing their energy consumption and levels of pollution.”

Pope Francis also wants to promote recycling and sustainable agriculture. All of this will require courage on the part of politicians who “will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results which dominates present-day economics and politics.”

Transparency is an essential element in the dialogue to find better ways of preserving the environment, according to the pope, especially transparency in the assessment of the environmental impact of business ventures and projects. Corruption, on the other hand, conceals “the actual environmental impact of a given project” and produces “specious agreements which fail to inform adequately and to allow for full debate.”

What is needed is environmental impact assessments that are “interdisciplinary, transparent and free of all economic or political pressure.” Only when scientific and political discussions are imbued with honesty and truth can all the different stakeholders reach a consensus on the alternatives available. “The culture of consumerism, which prioritizes short-term gain and private interest, can make it easy to rubber-stamp authorizations or to conceal information.”

Francis calls for a thorough investigation and discussion of any proposed venture. “What will it accomplish? Why? Where? When? How? For whom? What are the risks? What are the costs? Who will pay those costs and how?”

If a study finds that “serious and irreversible damage may result, a project should be halted or modified.” He recognizes that sometimes the evidence is disputable. In such cases, the burden of proof should be on the projects promoters “to demonstrate that the proposed activity will not cause serious

harm to the environment or to those who inhabit it.”

The bottom line for Francis is that “profit cannot be the sole criterion to be taken into account.” Francis believes that “Politics must not be subject to the economy, nor should the economy be subject to the dictates of an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy.” Rather they should be in dialogue for the common good.

He complains that this did not happen during the recent banking crisis. “Saving banks at any cost, making the public pay the price, foregoing a firm commitment to reviewing and reforming the entire system, only reaffirms the absolute power of a financial system.” The response to the crisis “did not include rethinking the outdated criteria which continue to rule the world.”

Nor does Francis believe that the environmental protection can be assured by simply calculating costs and benefits and leaving solutions to market forces. “We need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals.” He believes that it is unrealistic to “hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations.”

On the contrary, “Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention,” he writes. “Moreover, biodiversity is considered at most a deposit of economic resources available for exploitation, with no serious thought for the real value of things, their significance for persons and cultures, or the concerns and needs of the poor.”

Francis believes that the economic argument is in fact on his side. “Efforts to promote a

sustainable use of natural resources are not a waste of money, but rather an investment capable of providing other economic benefits in the medium term,” he writes. “If we look at the larger picture, we can see that more diversified and innovative forms of production which impact less on the environment can prove very profitable.”

But what he would really like to see is a change from an excessive technological investment in consumption to greater investment in resolving urgent problems facing the human family. He also believes that we need “to think of containing growth by setting some reasonable limits and even retracing our steps before it is too late.” The behavior of those who constantly consume and destroy is unsustainable, “while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity.” As a result, “the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth.”

Francis is calling for new models of global development that redefine our notion of progress. “A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress.”

Those who want to maximize profits do not calculate “the losses entailed in the desertification of the land, the harm done to biodiversity or the increased pollution.”

Profits are increased by ignoring externalities, the costs imposed on others including future generations. This is why we need “a politics which is farsighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis.” But corruption and short-sightedness cripples politics so that it fails to enact sound public policy and fulfill its responsibilities.

Finally, Pope Francis calls for a dialogue between religion and science. He does not believe that science can provide a complete explanation of life since the scientific methodology leaves little room “for aesthetic sensibility, poetry, or even reason’s ability to grasp the ultimate meaning and purpose of things.”

For those who put their faith in technology, he says, “Any technical solution which science claims to offer will be powerless to solve the serious problems of our world if humanity loses its compass, if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well.”

At the same time, he says believers must acknowledge that “a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us to justify mistreating nature, to exercise tyranny over creation, to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence.”

Solutions will come only through dialogue “for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity,” he writes. “The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which requires patience, self-discipline and generosity.”

“Although the post-industrial period may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history,” he writes, “nonetheless there is reason to hope that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities.”

Volunteers Needed For Environment Change

On Wednesday, September 30th and Thursday, October 1st, we will make the transformation of our worship environment from Ordinary Time I to Ordinary Time II – Fall. Many hands

are needed to help us make the change. If you are available and would like to help, please join us at 9:00 a.m. each morning.

Thank You

...to our faithful volunteer parishioners who clean the church, the parish hall, and bathrooms each week: **Alfred Madoshi, Carole Miller, Rose Salamanca, Jun Bajet, Angela Bueno, Mency Osborne, Steve Rojek, Emilia Freking, Robert Goncalves, Mary Ewing, Gino Ramos, and Harlan Young.**

Stand Down On The Delta – From Grand Knight Bill Barbanica

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the Knights and family members that participated in the Stand Down on the Delta event this past weekend.

This event was an eye opener on the many problems that a large number of our vets have (men and women) and how they survive day-to-day living on the streets.

A portion of the fairgrounds was turned into a small city. The services that were available ranged from health care of all types, religious counseling and religious services, legal coaching, personal grooming, veterinary services and three well-balanced meals each day. There were beds and tents for the vets to stay in as well as showers. I was told that the number of vets that were in this small city was up to 450 people with another 100 to 150 volunteers. This was a great event to be part of and to be able to give back to the community.

Our Fourth Degree Assembly, along with the council from Holy Rosary,

prepared an excellent tri-tip meal on Saturday night. The veterans and volunteers gave the Knights a very warm thank you and appreciation for the great meal.

The following are the brothers from our council and family members that volunteered that I know of. If I missed anyone, please let me know. It is important that I add your name to the list of volunteers.

I also want to give Fr. Robert a special thank you for celebrating mass for our vets on Saturday. Our volunteers were: **Father Robert, Dr. & Mrs. Mario Rizzo Sr., Mario Rizzo Jr., Forrest Towe, Kelly Ouimet, Jose Perez, Pat McConnell, Cory McConnell, Megan McConnell, and Bill Barbanica.**

More Winds of Change from Rome

| Sept. 15, 2015

Roma locuta est. In two separate announcements this morning, [the Vatican announced that it had selected Bishop James Johnston](#), previously Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, to be the next Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph, and that both [Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago and Bishop George Murry, SJ, of Youngstown, have been appointed](#) as fathers to next month's synod on the family. Sacred Heart of Mary Sr. Maureen Kelleher was also named as an auditor.

I do not know much about Bishop Johnston, but his bio has some interesting details. He has supported the Catholic Worker movement in his previous assignment. He worked to build Catholic Charities of

Southern Missouri. Bishop Johnston also served on the USCCB Committee on Child Protection, so he will be familiar with, and presumably committed to, the pledges the bishops have made to the people of God but sometimes ignored regarding child protection. On the other hand, [he over-reacted](#) when Mercy hospital announced earlier this year that it was extending benefits to legally married same-sex couples. To be sure, that was before the Supreme Court ruling on the issue, but I still find his words a tad histrionic.

Whatever his past experiences, it is the future that must define his present circumstances. Bishop Johnston goes to a diocese that has been broken in almost every way a diocese can be broken. His predecessor Bishop Finn was divisive from the moment he arrived, and the divisions only seemed to get worse as he continued as that diocese's bishop. He was sacked, ultimately, over his conviction for failing to report child sex abuse by a member of his clergy, the only U.S. bishop to be so convicted. Yet, he stayed on, apparently unaware that he, of all people, could not begin the healing process the diocese so desperately needed. To say that there was a breakdown in trust between bishop and people would be an understatement. Bishop Johnston is inheriting a mess. He is well advised to spend the first months of his tenure listening, listening and more listening.

The synod appointments are significant in every way. +Cupich has been on Pope Francis' radar screen for some time now; otherwise he never would have been appointed to Chicago last autumn. And, at last November's USCCB meeting, +Cupich was elected as an alternate to the synod by his brother bishops, showing support for him among the brethren as well. But, the bishops balanced their nomination of +Cupich as an alternate by also selecting San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone as an alternate.

+Cordileone also serves as chair of the ad hoc committee for the defense of marriage, one of the central topics at the synod, so one would have expected that Rome might appoint him too. Alas.

Pope Francis instead selected Bishop George Murry, a fellow Jesuit, and one of the few African-American bishops in the country. Murry served as Secretary to the USCCB so he is well respected by his peers, considered a pastoral moderate on hot button issues. He came to the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies' "[Erroneous Autonomy: A Conversation on Faith & Solidarity](#)" conference in June at the AFL-CIO. In fact, I think the only picture you can find of +Cupich and +Murry together was at that event, standing next to AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. That will make some of our friends on the right go ballistic.

More importantly, both +Cupich and +Murry are the opposite of a culture warrior; they are churchmen. Both, also, have the kind of accessible personalities that have earned them high marks for pastoral care. They are not clericalists in the least, known for their commitment to consultation, balanced in their statements on contentious issues. These appointments are wonderful. The U.S. delegation is now more balanced than it was by a long shot.

The appointment of Sr. Kelleher is also significant. She was one of the founding members of NETWORK, the social justice lobby founded by women religious and currently led by Sr. Simone Campbell and, also currently, out on the bus in their annual "Nuns on the Bus" tour. NETWORK was singled out for criticism in the doctrinal assessment of the LCWR approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Now, one of the founders has been singled out for an important role at an important synod. Who says things never change in the Church?

Next week, Pope Francis will step foot in this country for the first time in his life. But, somehow, he has found effective means of

gathering information about the state of the Church in the U.S. and how we desperately need to move past our defensive, culture war crouch. He has recognized the need to hold bishops accountable, appoint bishops who are pastoral and churchmen, not ideologues and culture warriors, and he has taken steps to heal the rift between women religious and the bishops and the curia. Not bad for the first two years!

5 minutes with Francis: Placing people first

[NCR Staff](#) | *Sept. 15, 2015* [NCR Today](#)
[5 minutes with Francis](#)

NCR's new blog series "5 minutes with Francis" poses the question: If you managed to meet up with Pope Francis during his U.S. visit -- and you had his full, undivided attention for five minutes -- what would you say to him?

Kristen Blount:

If I had the chance to spend five minutes with Pope Francis, I would want to thank him for his emphasis on placing people first. I feel like the Holy Spirit is at work through Pope Francis reminding us all that the story of salvation is the story of people. There's been such an emphasis on rule-following and political shibboleths in recent years, while at the same time the hierarchy of the church placed the reputation of the church above the well-being of children.

Pope Francis has reminded us that people come first. God knows us, every single human being, by name, and has a plan for us. Jesus came for each one of us. We are all children of God. Pope Francis reminds us repeatedly that we are all sinners in need of mercy and compassion. Divorced people, married people, straight people, gay people, poor people, rich people: we are all God's children. We are all in need of a Year of Mercy.

Thank you, Pope Francis, for reminding us to love one another and to forgive one another.

