

Date: September 28, 2025 (Pentecost 16)

1. Texts: Jeremaih 32:1-3a, 6-15; Ps. 91:1-6, 14-16; 1 Timothy 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31.
2. Subject: discipleship.
3. Topic: cooperation with God in his plan.
4. Aim: encourage.
5. Proposition: "Disciples of Jesus cooperate with God, even if it's difficult."

TOGETHER WITH GOD, TOGETHER FOR GOD

Part of what makes the Church attractive to people is belonging. We belong to a defined community, in which we can share our hopes and struggles. We belong together and with one another. You know, *(sing if possible)* "We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord." Or, "Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, with cords that cannot be broken." It helps knowing that there are others working to be faithful with the same struggles and questions. We may not often take advantage of our opportunities, but it helps knowing that we are with people who understand.

But that community of the faithful—that "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" meeting in this parish—is far more significant than any Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. The Church is the Bride of Christ and his Body. The Church is the servant of God and the chosen instrument for his plan of salvation. The Church is no club, no social services agency. The Church is the whole people of God, empowered by his Spirit to carry out his will. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," we pray. It is the Church meeting locally through whom God answers this prayer.

This truth complicates life a bit.

First of all, we're human beings, complete with all our faults and problems. We don't always cooperate with one another, let alone cooperate with God.

Being God's answer to prayer is not an easy thing even for the Church. This requires a certain amount of self-sacrifice, surrender and courage. We don't always have these qualities in abundance.

It's probably worth exploring this a little more deeply.

It is because God is merciful and because he loves his people that he has made us into one body of the faithful. He has gathered us, like a hen gathers her chicks. He had already had generations upon generations of his people struggling to follow his will. He knew that the newly-formed Christians would need mutual support.

But it was not enough to be supportive to one another. That would be too narrow and too self-centred a focus. We have been gathered into one to show forth God's power to all people. He has made us his disciples, which means that we are his ambassadors. He has gathered us into one, so that we might go forth in power and love to minister to our world.

The impact of our mutual support and ambassadorship will be the transformation of our relationships. God will be known and glorified through the Church. His glory will be revealed. Salvation will be placed before all whom we meet.

This is what supernaturally happens when we work together with God and work together for God. It will only be inhibited when we lack the courage for self-sacrifice and surrender.

We've all experienced the fear of rejection when we speak about our faith and our God. Heck, some of us have even been rejected because of God's work in our lives. Courage is essential in being the Church. It always has been.

But courage is not the heroic stuff of action movies with Dwayne Johnson, Sylvester Stallone, Robert Downey Jr. or Tom Cruise. Courage is the choice to act despite the fear. Courage is trusting God to be God even when we are under pressure. Courage is the decision to rely on God even when the odds are stacked against you. That's courage.

It will take courage to make sacrifices on God's behalf, such as the choice to speak up in his name. It will take courage to surrender to God's will for our lives, so that others may experience him. Courage is essential in being the Church.

That's where the communal bond comes into play. We don't have to have courage all on our own. We're part of a supportive family. We belong to a community. We are only isolated ambassadors of God if we choose to be. God created us to proclaim him in word and deed. But he created us as the whole people of God so that we might fulfill that will. He has made us the fulfillment of his own prayer. That's quite an honour and a blessing. He's smart, this God of ours. And he loves us to bits.

AMEN.