

Presentation

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For Coptic Catholics*

Among the many interventions presented in the aula by the Synodal Fathers before the Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops on the subject of “The Bishop, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World,” those concerning the triple mission of the bishop as teacher of God’s Word, sanctifier of souls and administrator of his diocese took a major place.

To introduce this issue of *Vincentiana* dedicated to this ecclesial subject of great importance, I would like to speak of some of the qualities that a bishop should be endowed with, and which the participants in the Synod of Bishops discussed more than once.

1. The Bishop as servant of the Gospel

The bishop’s mission is one of service, following the example of the Divine Teacher, who did not come to have others serve him but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for the many (Mt 20:28). He should make himself available and be within reach of all his faithful, affable and understandable.

2. The Bishop as father and friend of his clergy

As the head and leader of the portion of the Church confided to him, the bishop should above all be a father for all the faithful, and especially for his clergy, his devoted fellow workers. He should be a father who shares with them the joys and sorrows of their ministry and who is interested in those experiencing difficulties. He should spend the time needed to see them and listen to them, and have confidence in them, and remain their faithful friend, following the example of Jesus Christ who said to his apostles: “I no longer speak of you as slaves. Instead, I call you friends, since I have made known to you all that I heard from my Father” (Jn 15:15).

3. The Bishop and service of the poor

As a son of St. Vincent de Paul, I very much appreciated the intervention of our Most Honored Father, Robert P. Maloney, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, during the meeting of the Synod on the theme of the bishop and service of the poor, and of the bishop’s preferential love for them, as our Holy Father John Paul II never ceases teaching and putting into practice.

I hope that one of the main results that this Synod will bring to the Church and today's world is greater love and solidarity among all people, and that all of us will put into practice the lesson of the Master at the final judgment: "I was hungry ... I was thirsty ... a stranger ... naked ... ill ... in prison ... and you visited me. Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me. I tell you solemnly, that each time that you did this to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did so to me" (Mt 25:34-40).

(JOHN RYBOLT, C.M., translator)