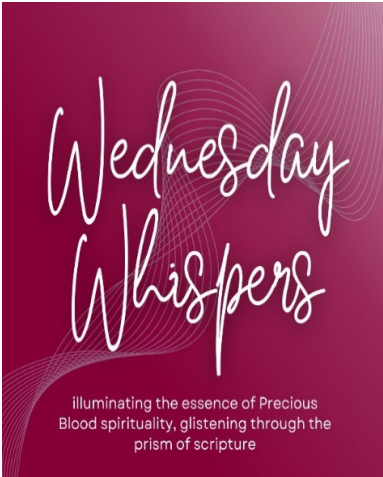




A weekly reflection by members
of the Precious Blood Community

September 24, 2025

Sr. Margaret Washington, ASC

“That all may be one”
John 17:11



Sr. Margaret offers an excellent synopsis of **LISTENING TOGETHER** by Timothy Radcliffe, OP:

Radcliffe helps the reader embark on a journey of faith and engage in the greatest exercise in listening in the history of humanity. Before beginning to share a synopsis, I prayed as I always do with every letter for the grace to be truly faithful to the message it carries, and I will continue to pray that you will find it a message that invites your own reflection.

The author helps us understand what is needed within the Synodal Process, or coming together in parish groups and gatherings within our dioceses, that will continue to be shared worldwide within the Church, to transform us both individually and as a Church to live the message of the Gospels in 2025 and into the future. He does it within the context of retreats he conducted during the 16th Ordinary Assembly of Bishops or Synod on Synodality held in Rome.

Friendship- On the night before Jesus died, he prayed to his Father "that all may be one as we are one" (John 17:11), but from the beginning, in almost every document of the New Testament, we see the disciples divided, quarreling, and cutting each other off. At this time, we recognize the polarization that has taken place not only in our country but also in our Church.

Radcliffe reminds us that there is no reason for tensions to tear us apart, we are bearers of a hope beyond hope and heirs to the spacious home of the kingdom of God in which the Lord tells us "there are many dwelling places." (John 14:2) Before going further, the author tells us that the Church turns in on itself so it can open its doors to all people as Jesus intended it to be. He says that the Synod will be successful if it leads us into a more profound friendship with our Lord and with each other.

In the Synod, we have the creative task of making improbable friendships, especially with people with whom we disagree. Friendship is the enjoyment of another's presence, and we find the example in the Gospels that tell us that Jesus invited his inner circle – Peter, James, and John- to be with him on the mountain, as they would be with him in the Garden of Gethsemane. True conversation cannot be controlled, and it is risky. One surrenders oneself in its direction. Where will this lead the Church? When I open myself to them in friendship, who will I become? We are reminded that we shall all be changed. It will be a little death and resurrection.

Radcliffe quoted Thomas Merton: *"Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts, where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their being, the person that each one is in God's eyes."* The author reminded us that friendship flourishes when we dare to share our most profound convictions and our doubts and seek the truth together.

Listening- In citing a recent book titled **AMERICAN RAGE**, the author reminds us that our world is filled with anger. This anger infects the Church too. A justified anger at the sexual abuse of children. Anger at the position of women in the Church, Anger at the racial and cultural inequality. Anger at the awful liberals and conservatives. Are we like Jesus, ready to ask each other, "What are you talking about? Do we dare to hear the reply? We listen to people and what they are saying, and also what they are trying to say. We listen for how they are right, their grain of truth. What is shared is never nonsense. If we really listen, our ready-made answers will evaporate.

Conversation needs an imaginable leap into the experience of the other person, to see with their eyes and hear with their ears. What pain or hope do they carry? We need to leap across the boundaries, not just the left and right, but also cultural and generational boundaries. Today, many young people –especially in the West but increasing everywhere –grow up in a secular world, agnostic or even atheistic. Youth have much to share, and their presence is very much needed in these gatherings. Their adventure in these gatherings is to discover the Gospel, the Church, and the tradition. Like Jesus, we must walk with them and learn what excites their hearts. What are you talking about? We need to learn to talk with each other playfully. The Gospel challenges us to become like children. "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter *the kingdom of heaven*." (Matthew 18:3) We are called to become playful, joyful in our sharing, not childish. Sometimes, we in the Church are afflicted by a dull, joyless seriousness. Laughter needs to be part of our sharing.

Making the point that fleeing from difference is something we hope not to do in our effort to bridge the distance between us, the author shares this analogy: "If we flee from difference, we shall be barren and childless, in our homes and in our Church. Parents and families can teach the Church a lot about dealing with differences." If instead, we discover the pleasure of imagining why our sisters and brothers hold their views we find odd, then a new springtime will begin in the Church. The Holy Spirit will give us the gift of speaking other languages. We see in the Gospels that Jesus did not attempt to control conversations; he went where people were, not where he wished them to go. As we take this faith journey together, calling upon the Holy Spirit to guide us, the seeds of faith will germinate within us.

Authority- There can be no conversation between us unless we recognize that each of us speaks with authority. We are all baptized into Christ, priest, prophet, and king. Each one has been anointed by the Holy One, and each have knowledge...The anointing received abides in the one baptized (1John 2:20-27). Most likely for the first time, lay people are asked to contribute. The whole world is suffering a crisis of authority. All institutions have lost authority. Politicians, the law, and the press have all felt authority draining away. Authority often seems to belong to others: dictators who are gaining power in many places, new media, celebrities, and influencers. The world hungers for voices that will speak out with authority about the meaning of our lives. Dangerous voices threaten to fill the vacuum. The author says that, "It is a world powered not by authority but by contracts- even in the family, the university, and the Church."

In the Gospel of Luke (4:32), we hear that "they were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority." We recall that halfway through the Gospels, at Caesarea Philippi, the author tells us that, *"there is a massive crisis of authority that makes our contemporary crisis look like nothing. Jesus told his closest friends that he had to go to Jerusalem, where he would suffer, die, and rise again."* In order to strengthen their faith, he took Peter, James, and John up a mountain and became transfigured in their sight together with Abraham and Moses. His authority was revealed to them through the prism of his glory. The disciples were filled with joy! In the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is no rivalry. As a people of God, our Church can speak with authority to the world if, in the synod, we transcend our competitive ways of existing and communicating. Then the world will recognize the voice of the shepherd who summons us to life.

Goodness- Moses led Israel out of slavery into freedom. Israel did not wish to go. They hungered for safety in Egypt. They feared making the journey through the desert to Jerusalem. But Moses, to whom God spoke (Exodus 33:11), summons them to find freedom; he summons us today to find our freedom in passing through the desert. The saints give us examples of picking up our crosses and following Jesus. The author shares this quote: G. K. Chesterton said, *"Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live, taking the form of readiness to die."* Eleven of the twelve apostles suffered death in sharing the Gospel. John died after years of exile on the Island of Patmos, where he wrote his Gospel. In baptism, we have renounced the right to be enslaved by fear. We will only have authority in our fearful world if we risk everything.

Truth- Our world has fallen out of love with the truth: fake news, wild assertions on the internet, mad conspiracy theories. But, we are called to be truthful about the challenges we must address, about hopes and sorrows, the anger and the joy of being people of God. Love opens us to the truth of the other person. Goodness without truth collapses into sentimentality. Truth without goodness leads to Inquisition. The Councils of the past have a voice in our conversations that cannot be denied. If the Church becomes truly a community of mutual empowerment, we shall speak with authority of the Lord. Becoming such a Church will be painful and beautiful.

*Radcliffe cites the following from **Evangelii Gaudium**, Pope Francis wrote, "there is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills."* Letting go of control is not doing nothing! (Another words, it is a positive action -my interpretation, not the author's.)

Radcliffe insists that because the Church has been so much of a structure of control, sometimes strong interventions are needed to let the Holy Spirit take us where we never thought of going, and he reminds us that, in Gethsemane, Jesus surrenders control over his life and entrusts it to the Father. "Not as I will!"

Finally, the author tells us that "If we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit of truth, we shall doubtlessly argue. It will sometimes be painful. There will be truths we would rather not face. But we shall be led a little deeper into the mystery of divine love."

Sr. Margaret Washington, ASC, has been a vowed member of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ for over seventy years. She has served the community in many capacities, most recently as the Chaplain for NACC. To learn more about the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, [click here](#).

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