

Spiritual Worldliness

A Lord's Flock General Assembly Topic

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There is a constant struggle between the world and holiness. What do these two mean?

- **Worldliness** refers to the things that pull us away from the Lord; they are temporal (passing) and give superficial fulfillment.
- **Spirituality** refers to a set of philosophies and beliefs of doing things; it involves sacraments, devotions, charity, fellowship and service.

By combining these two dichotomies, the result is Spiritual Worldliness which is doing things with faith but getting the glory for ourselves, or taking from God the glory that is due to Him.

1. Spiritual Worldliness

- 1.1. It is deeply embedded in the church. Those who have started the journey towards a life of a discipleship (priests, preachers, elders) most likely will have spiritual worldliness. Pope Francis warns us that it is intricate, hidden in piety & fluent speech.
- 1.2. If we do not seek honor from the Lord, it will be difficult to follow Him. "How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes only from God?" (John 5:44).
- 1.3. Those who look like angels are more dangerous than those who are openly evil. Those who are active in evangelization are the most likely targets of the devil.

2. There are two **NEGATIVE FORCES** that we should resist to strengthen our faith:

- 2.1. **Gnosticism** – is a purely subjective faith. It is the type of faith that an individual's thinking, beliefs or ways should be followed. The church is espousing **Sinodality** – a universal process of journeying together. Jesus did not insist or impose His way. Rather, He started a conversation with His disciples. We should be able to accompany each other side by side (not one leading the other).
- 2.2. **Neo Pelagianism** (based on British Bishop Pelagius) is the belief that we can perfect things through our own human efforts,

without God in the picture. One can be very prayerful, devoted and faithful and yet rely only on one's brilliance without being aware of taking the glory from God.

3. What are the concerns today?

- 3.1. **Being elitists** – feeling preferred or favored in social and economic status to the disadvantage of blue-collared workers. There is elitism among bishops and priests who are being separated from the people and distanced from the poor.
- 3.2. **Being rich or poor** should not be a factor in serving the Lord. Pope Francis reminds us that the little ones always pay the price; they are left out of the table and left with crumbs.
- 3.3. **Bringing the sense of brotherhood** outside the community. If we remain the same community that we are today five years from now, then we will be irrelevant.

4. What are the **POSITIVE** things that we must do?

- 4.1. We should be careful not to interchange the roles. There is no servant of God that is greater than Him. How will we know? When we pray & serve, make demands on the Lord, then we have become the Master. When we try to be compassionate or generous but stop our efforts when we do not receive rewards, then we have become the Master, instead of the servant.
- 4.2. We should be humble in victory. Be gracious in defeat. We are just servants/messengers of God. If we fall short, let us still continue.

Conclusion:

Let us muscle up, not just with positive force, but also through negative force, by resisting things that will pull us away from God. We need to continue with the calling to advance God's kingdom.

Reflection: What are your specific struggles with spiritual worldliness?

1. Who do you hang out with or have coffee with?
2. From whom do you seek honor?
3. To whom are you most loyal to?

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