

The genie is out of the bottle.

The blind man can see again. *The Lord has saved his people.* To bring it closer to home, the Holy Spirit is breaking through. The institutional church, the sometimes very clericalist church, can no longer contain the power of the Spirit. The moment Pope Francis said, "Who am I to judge?", everything changed.

This weekend, the Synod of the Family has drawn to a close. Senior bishops and cardinals have openly opposed the Holy Father, and more or less accused him of trying to undermine Catholic teaching and Catholic truths. Such dissent and disunity at the very highest level is not something we are accustomed to. It puts our little arguments about Saturday evening Mass firmly into perspective.

*Shout with joy for Jacob. Proclaim! Praise! Shout!* To be challenged so publicly and openly must be deeply painful. Pope Francis must be suffering greatly. And yet, and yet he remains so joyful. In fact, joy seems to be at the very heart of his message. How on earth does he do it?

*Those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap.* Pope Francis goes out to the margins. Pope Francis feels the pain of the migrant and the dispossessed. Pope Francis shares the tears of the broken-hearted. This joy is not a natural cheerfulness. His joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

*"Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me."* Not just once, but twice. "What do you want me to do for you?" asks Jesus finally. Persistence, regularity, frequency in prayer is the only way. Total faith in the face of adversity. A deep interior life, a deep sense of the presence of God, an expectancy that the Holy Spirit really will change and transform things.

*Every high priest has been taken out of mankind and is appointed to act for men in their relations with God.* Pope Francis is that high priest. At this particular moment in the life of the Church, in the life of humanity, he is opening up new horizons, he is opening up the mercy of God, he is interpreting Catholic truth for today, interpreting Catholic truth in a world that is constantly changing.

In case you hadn't noticed I am a great fan of Pope Francis, a great fan of the changes to pastoral practice that he would appear to advocate, a great fan of listening to people where they are, a great fan of openness and acceptance.

'Almighty, ever-living God, increase my faith, hope and charity, and make me love what you command so that I may merit what you promise. Through Christ our Lord.'

