

**HOMILY OF HIS ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO**  
**WORKSHOP FOR BISHOPS IN ECCLESIAL ADMINISTRATION AT**  
**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA**  
**MEMORIAL OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA – JULY 31, 2018**  
**PRESENTATION CHAPEL, THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, WASHINGTON, DC**

My Brothers,

I am pleased to be with you on this Memorial of St. Ignatius of Loyola. As the Apostolic Nuncio, I convey to you the warm wishes and paternal affection of the Holy Father as you exercise your ministry as bishops. Your participation in this workshop on ecclesial administration is a sign not only that you take your ongoing formation seriously but also that you love your people and want to be good stewards of the mysteries, persons and resources entrusted to your care. It is also a sign of humility, a recognition that we don't know everything, not even when we are ordained as bishops! There is always more to learn as we grow in wisdom, which Bonaventure describes as "knowledge infused with charity."

The wise steward knows how to discern what is best for those whom he serves. He learns gradually to discern what is of God and what is from the Evil One. Certainly, Ignatius of Loyola promoted discernment in the Church, as does our Holy Father who suggested that we should be:

"endowed with a sense of the divine and the diabolical relative to the occurrences of human life and history [...] be able to discern what is from God and what is from the devil. For this, in the Exercises of Saint Ignatius asks that he be introduced both to the intentions of the Lord of Life and to those of the enemy of human nature and his lies. What he has written is truly bold; it is bold, but discernment is precisely this ...We need to truly understand this: in life, not all is black on white or white on black. No! The shades of grey prevail in life. We must teach them to discern in this grey area." ("UN INCONTRO PRIVATO A CRACOVIA CON PAPA FRANCESCO," *LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA*, 10 SETTEMBRE 2016, 3989/17, P. 349)

Discernment in the Church is more necessary than ever. There are many things to discern – which personnel and priests to appoint; who to admit or not to the seminary; how to best collaborate with the lay faithful and when to heed their advice; how to best use limited resources for the spiritual and pastoral welfare of the flock. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope called upon every Christian and every community – you and your local churches – to discern the path that the Lord points out to you (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 20) in obedience to the Lord's call to go forth – even to the peripheries of society – in fulfillment of your mission.

As leaders, we have a special obligation, if we are to discern the path forward, to hold ourselves accountable to the Lord. Ignatius teaches us of the need for vigilance against the enemy who

"behaves like a military leader, setting about the conquest and seizure of the object he desires. The commander of an army, after setting up his camp and inspecting the fortifications and defenses of a fortress, attacks it at its weakest point. In the same way, the enemy of our human nature makes his rounds to inspect all our virtues, theological, cardinal and moral, and where he finds us weakest and in greatest need as regards our eternal salvation, there he attacks us and tries to

take us.” (IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, RULES FOR DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS, WEEK I, RUE 14)

The fundamental task is to discern what is from the Evil One and what is from the Lord. The parable of the weeds and wheat speaks to distinguishing what is from the Son of Man, who sows good seed, that is, the children of God, in the field that is the world from the weeds, the children of the Evil One, sown by the Devil. In the Greek, the word used for weeds is *zizania*, which could be translated as *tares* or *darnel*, but which specifically refers to ryegrass. *Zizania* looks like wheat as it begins to grow, and only when it is mature can one discern the difference.

Jesus cautions his disciples of the need to be patient and to discern because things are not always initially clear, certainly not as clear as they will be at the end of the ages. It is sometimes very difficult to have perfect knowledge about the wheat and the weeds, and for insight, we must constantly turn to the Lord.

While farmers deal with discerning between wheat and weeds, we must deal with people, who have the possibility of responding to the Divine Initiative and, being converted, can be transformed from sinner to saint, from weeds to wheat. Following the example of the Lord who is patient with us, we in turn must be patient with our clergy and the flock.

In contrast to the disciples, who want to take the hasty action of uprooting the weeds, Jesus urges patience, lest the wheat and weeds be taken up together. Time and experience are necessary to really discern the fruits, to really know whether we are experiencing consolation or desolation, to understand whether something is from God or whether we are being deceived by the Father of Lies.

But this patient discernment is essential to the New Evangelization and is especially important in how we treat and judge people. The Holy Father reminds us:

“Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for the constraints of time. Faithful to the Lord’s gift, it also bears fruit. An evangelizing community ... cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds. The sower, when he sees weeds sprouting among the grain does not grumble or overreact. He or she finds a way to let the word take flesh in a particular situation and bear fruits of new life, however imperfect or incomplete these may appear.” (POPE FRANCIS, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION EVANGELII GAUDIUM, 24 NOVEMBER 2013, 24)

Let us ask the Lord, through the intercession of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, to help us to patiently discern God’s will so that it may bear fruit leading to eternal life.