

**May 1, 2016**  
**6th Sunday after Easter**

**The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will teach you everything I have told you**

*It is not the idea of God that matters, it is the kind of God we choose to believe in that does.*

**What is this saying to the clergy?**

Pope Francis is quoted in a recent article by Joshua J. McClee which he titles: “*Spirit is not the Property of the Hierarchy.*” It is in the current issue of the National Catholic Reporter, April 26, 2016. I would like to quote some of what Francis said in that article. It is to the point.

“Pope Francis has sharply denounced the culture of clericalism among priests in the Catholic church, calling it *one of the greatest deformations* that must be confronted by the global faith community and saying it helps *diminish and undervalue* the contributions that laypeople make. He strongly reaffirmed the right of laypeople to make decisions in their lives, saying that priests must trust that the Holy Spirit is working in them and that the Spirit *is not only the property of the ecclesial hierarchy.*”

"It is good for us to remember, he says, that the Church is not an elite of priests, of consecrated people, of bishops -- but that everyone forms the Holy Faithful People of God. Clericalism turns off, little by little, the prophetic fire from which the entire Church is called to give testimony in the heart of its peoples. Clericalism forgets that the Church belongs to all the people of God and not only an elect or illuminated few.

"It is not the pastor who must say to the layperson that which they must do and say; he or she knows more and better than us, says the pope. Our role, our joy, the joy of the pastor, is to serve them, not them to serve us."

*It is not the idea of God that matters, it is the kind of God we choose to believe in that does.*

**What is this saying to the laity?**

There is a biography recently published on the life of Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister titled: “*Joan Chittister, Her Journey from Certainty to Faith.*” I would like to quote some of what Sr. Joan said in that book. It is to the point.

“Each of us must approach the God who persistently pursues us in our way. It is not the idea of God that matters, it is the kind of God we choose to believe in that matters.

“The question is, what kind of God do I believe in. We all have had different gods in our lifetime: God the angry, God the indifferent and remote, God the magician, God the implacable judge, God the tease. All those Gods have failed me. I learned that fear of wrath did not seduce me to love. I learned that God the distant doer of unpredictable magic failed to engage my soul, let alone enlighten it. I learned that life was surely about far more important things than walking

around in a darkened mystery-world, sometimes bumping into the God who does good things, and sometimes the God who does bad.

“The imagined God goes nowhere beyond who we are so that until we unmask the God who lives in our own hearts regardless of the endless panoply of other god images we have created for ourselves, we will never understand another thing about our life.

"So I have abandoned God the stern father who has no time for human nonsense and little time for women. I have abandoned God the cloud-sitter who keeps count of our childish stumblings toward spiritual adulthood in order to exact fierce retribution from humans for being human. All those gods do not exist, never did exist, must not exist if God is really God.

*It is not the idea of God that matters, it is the kind of God we choose to believe in that does.*

### **What is this saying to us?**

As. Sr. Joan says, “There seems to be something in the air that is generating new searches for God to understand God in new ways in the evil of the holocaust; the struggles for social justice; concern for women's issues; involvement in facing environment challenges; and from Christianity’s encounter with the goodness and truth in the world's religious traditions.

“For centuries the model of God was as that of a monarch at the very peak of the pyramid of all being. It focused on a single powerful individual who dwells on high, rules the cosmos and judges human conduct. He, for it was always a ruling male, was essentially remote and simply a bit larger than ourselves.

“We are moving from God as a trophy to be won or a master to be pacified, to God as cosmic unity and everlasting light. We are coming to know that God is here now, God is living in us right now. The God we seek is already here, without a face of any color or gender, a God who is with us - in the obvious. This burns our punitive and paltry images of God away. Ours is a God who can stand up to the tests and questions emanating from science, from cosmology, from the increasingly blurred borders between nations, cultures, religions and genders. God is working out creation with us as we go. God is not the God of fixed determinations, God is an evolving into the future, beckoning us beyond ourselves into eternal growth into God.

**Jesus reminds us that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will remind us of everything he told us.**

*It is not the idea of God that matters, it is the kind of God we choose to believe in that does.*

† We will know what kind of God we choose to believe in by the way we relate to our planet and to each other in our political, economic and social choices.

† We will know that how we choose to relate to our planet and to each other in our political, economic and social choices is how we relate to God.