News

Religious Life



Pope Francis meets with members of the Capuchin Tertiary Sisters of the Holy Family on Sept. 26 at the Vatican. They were in Rome for their general chapter. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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The humility of silence can help Christians sift through the loud and divisive noise in the world in order to listen to and discern God's will, Pope Francis told a group of Capuchin sisters.

Meeting with the Capuchin Tertiary Sisters of the Holy Family on Sept. 26 at the Vatican, the pope said the imposition of opinions, political or personal agendas can desensitize men and women and make them slaves "of those who have the ability to condition those signals."

"The prophecy that Jesus asks of us is precisely to go against this current, to seek silence, to separate ourselves from the world, from the noise," he said. "This will allow us to pay attention and, with artisanal patience, to identify the different sounds, to weigh them and distinguish them."

In his address, the pope noted that the sisters, who are in Rome for their general chapter, are reflecting on two important aspects of Christian life, which are "humble listening and synodality."

"This is beautiful, this thing of sending the tongue on holiday and devoting oneself to listening, that you work more on hearing than on speaking. They are inspiring words, which have a deep root in religious life. To listen, the first thing that is needed is silence, deep silence, inner silence, that which we find in prayer," the pope said, departing from his prepared remarks.

The pope said life is "full of noise" and what often seems important is "to find that stimulus that will attract the attention of others, that will produce the most immediate response possible."

"For many, raising their voice — physically or morally — is presented as the solution to get the deafened masses to opt for their idea or opinion, always looking for a way to make their signal more audible, more attractive or more surprising, not to assert themselves," he said.

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However, those who initially heard those voices will sometimes "go to the call of an even more powerful cry," the pope said.

Nevertheless, he continued, Jesus asks his followers to instead counter that noise by finding "the harmony that only our silence can give" because true harmony can only "be found, not imposed."

"How many times we meet people who seem good but are not harmonious people, people who do not have an inner unity that inspires them to go forward. It is that harmony that is born, that is not imposed," the pope said.

Pope Francis encouraged the Capuchin sisters to not give in to the temptation of having "a beautiful melody in mind, while rejecting or trying to silence what is not in tune with it."

"This would be judging the other, placing oneself in God's place, deciding who deserves and who does not deserve to be there. It is a great arrogance that must be combated with the humility of our prophetic silence," the pope said.