

MAY 30, 2026 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

I love this exchange between Jesus and the temple leaders. “By what authority are you doing these things?” It is actually a valid question. Jesus, of course, knows what they are up to, they are trying to trap him. But, in fairness to the authorities, it was also their responsibility to ensure there were no false prophets, and there have always been many.

Jesus works through this tension. There must be authority. If Jesus came today and began preaching in the Church, it is quite possible that he would also be challenged and told, “You have no authority.” It sounds uncomfortable, but in a sense, it is true—he would not have the credentials expected by human standards.

In the Jewish tradition, a teacher received authority through a public ceremony where hands were laid upon the student. Even Saul, who became Saint Paul, would have received such authority. This continues today in ordination, when a bishop lays hands on a candidate after careful discernment and gives him authority.

Sometimes people say that the Church is not with the times or not welcoming, but it is not that simple. The Church often moves carefully, especially when recognizing holiness. When a saint is canonized, the Church is not making the person holy but confirming that they were truly from God.

There are two ways of understanding theology: revealed theology and natural theology. Revealed theology comes from Scripture. But there are also experiences of revelation throughout history, such as Marian apparitions. Even then, the Church must carefully examine and verify them.

We can recall the example of Our Lady of Lourdes, which was initially questioned and even rejected before being accepted. The Church must ensure that what is claimed to be from God is genuine.

Consider Padre Pio, known for his mystical experiences and the stigmata. For 15 years, he was not allowed to celebrate public Mass, hear confessions, or give blessings. The Church restricted him while investigating the authenticity of his experiences.

Similarly, Sister Faustina, associated with the Divine Mercy devotion, faced rejection and ridicule. She struggled to find a religious community that would accept her. Even within her convent, she was misunderstood. Her spiritual director, Father Sopoćko, first sent her for psychological evaluation to discern whether her experiences were genuine.

After her death, the Divine Mercy devotion was even suppressed by Rome due to misunderstandings, and Father Sopoćko was reprimanded. Yet, if something is truly from God, it will endure. Eventually, through the work of Pope John Paul II, the devotion was restored, and today we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday.

The Church also followed a process to confirm the truth about Jesus himself in the early days. Likewise, the process of canonization, from servant of God to venerable, to beatification, and finally canonization ensures that holiness is genuine. This process can take many years, even a century, though sometimes it moves more quickly, as in the cases of John Paul II and Mother Teresa.

All of this reminds us that when there is a revelation of Christ, it must be discerned carefully, because there are many false claims. We move forward patiently, trusting that God works through everything and that the truth will ultimately prevail.

Amen.