

## **THE DISAPPEARANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION**--November 20, 2022--[By: Diego Pereira Ríos]

The problem of God continues to be a challenge, perhaps not for ordinary people, but for those of us who believe in Him. Perhaps above all for us. Believing in a God who is love, who gives everything for others, who renounces his very omnipotence to become one more with those who suffer the most in the world -according to Christian theology- is increasingly difficult to testify. Many people who try to live it on a day-to-day basis, especially laymen and women who are there in our workplaces, in our families, in contact with the other people we meet in society and whom we try to infect with our faith and hope. , we are often stunned and shaken by the weight of the institutionality of religion. Secularism and postmodernity, which started a lack of trust in social institutions, continues to affect how one can believe in God today, but the same institution continues to give reasons to be disqualified. If it is only about obedience, ritualism, customs or tradition, a "clearing conscience", religion -increasingly- will continue in this process of disappearing.

The apologetic discourse that "without community there is no firm faith" does not make sense if it is only in defence of the institutionality or if it is only a question of continuing to reaffirm a hierarchy that needs faithful to survive. Both hierarchy and parishioner viciously combine to generate the evil of clericalism so combated by Pope Francis. If there is a caste that believes itself to be superior to the common denominator of the Church, it is because this majority recreates this need in itself. But as it is argued, if we look at what people show us, more and more people do not believe in God because of the scandals of the ecclesial institution, I insist: we are on our way to disappear. When I say that we are "stunned and shaken" by what happens to us as an ecclesial institution, I am not only referring to sexual abuse (which is the most frequently heard), but we must critically look at the path of the Church, and the supposed openness to a more democratic, more egalitarian, more equitable mentality, which is what we seek today through Synodality.

Personally, as the Church exists today, I think that the best thing that can happen to us is that it disappears. The medievalist, classist, sexist, homophobic, power-seeking structure must undoubtedly disappear. Many will think that these things only happen in countries where the Church is more numerous, not in Uruguay. But for those of us who are part of the People of God, who are within the Church, it is enough to approach the communities or parish groups, everything I am saying will be quickly perceived. What's more: I'm sure many of us are aware of all this, but we still carry two kinds of fears. The first, if we denounce it and make it known, we will surely be expelled or put a "mark" on us for not respecting the established order (even if they are only human norms) since as laymen our voice still has no weight in ecclesial decisions. On the other hand, we are so formatted in a hierarchy that has made us very dependent on priests, which does not allow us to walk in truth and freedom. It is that we lay people do not feel capable of making our opinion known in the face of various situations. This is the worst of fears.

For this reason, as long as all this remains the same, and as long as the Pope's proposal to convert the Church into a Synodal Church, where we are all equal, where we can all feel co-responsible for the salvation of others, distrust in the institution will continue to grow. , and the number of faithful will continue to decline. Is this the best thing that can happen to us? I don't know, I just know that many Catholics are getting colder and colder, their hearts do not vibrate at the proclamation of the Gospel, many follow the capitalist logic of the search for success, material and economic well-being, work to get the means to buy pleasure. Many of the Catholics who have a good economic footing continue to send their children to pursue a career that guarantees them a life of luxury. If there are committed missionaries, that is a thing of the youth stage, something fleeting, some solidarity signs of concrete actions without reflection or internalization. And everything continues to be downed by the hierarchy. As long as the internal emptiness continues to be filled with everything that is not God, faith will be a passing feeling. It is sad that those who do so much to live a mature and committed faith continue to be disqualified and not taken into account. For this reason, this type of institutional church must disappear in order to flourish again. That is our faith and our hope.