

A Statement about the recent vote of the USCCB

Dear Parishioners,

Love always has an aspect of deep compassion that leads to accepting the other person as part of this world, even when he or she acts differently than I would like.

This quote from Pope Francis's 2016 apostolic exhortation, "Amoris Laetitia" ["The Joy of Love", #92], may capture a challenge some of us may now have in light of Friday's vote of the USCCB to draft a document on the meaning of the Eucharist for their November meeting.

How do we continue to love those bishops who voted "differently than I would like?"

For some, there may be no challenge whatsoever. That is exactly what they wanted the Bishops to do. For others there may be disappointment and anger, with cries of hypocrisy.

No matter how you feel about Friday's vote, we don't actually know what will be contained in that future draft document or even whether it will be finally adopted. The media, on the other hand, seems to think they have it all figured out. Nevertheless, their reports, or should I say spin, can be quite polarizing and disconcerting.

Today's Gospel, I think, gives us hope. Jesus is with the apostles in the midst of a violent squall. The ship clearly represents the Church. Certainly, few would deny that the institutional Church seems to get itself into the middle of violent squalls time and time again, and more often than not the squalls are of their own making.

I do wonder, however, whether what we need at this time is to hear Jesus say to us, and not just to the storm, "Quiet, Be Still!" Such quieting, such stilling could allow us to refocus our attention so that some small opening can be made to try to love those who think or act differently than I would like. Such quieting, such stilling could also help us to take time to truly appreciate all that is good even amidst the institutional Church's current squalls.

I invite you today to slow down, not to rush to judgment. Perhaps stay centered on all that is good about just our small part of this world: our wonderful Catholic parish community for instance. Consider the many friendships that come from being part of this parish, the continuing teachings and learnings about Ignatian Spirituality and Discernment, our forming young people in a relationship with Jesus, our work for social justice, and our many charitable outreach programs to those in need. Having a Church community makes that all possible.

Whatever the final document of the bishops' may state, if and when there is a document adopted, we must remain a welcoming community where everyone belongs. We must continue to respect one another's conscience and deny no one communion who comes forward to receive. It would not be the parish we know and love were we to do otherwise.

No one should ever feel excluded or pushed out at St. Ignatius or in any parish for that matter. Did Paul feel excluded or pushed out when he disagreed with Peter or visa-versa? They had their disputes. They sometimes acted differently from the way the other would like. There was real tension and conflict, yet without that there would have been no growth or development.

Let us, then, hang in there together striving for unity amidst our diversity so that we may retain and continue to cultivate, amidst the various institutional church squalls, all that is good about our parish faith community and our larger world Church.

Blessings,

Fr. Joe