

“SPITTING IN THE WIND”: THE DEATH OF HONEST DIALOGUE

Polarization is a choice, not a foregone conclusion. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Of course, this does not imply that such grievances will be addressed to the full satisfaction of those filing them. Often, a **lively debate** ensues about how best to address **disparate viewpoints** on contentious issues. Our front steps and sidewalks have occasionally been used for Press Conferences. We have sought to be respectful so as not to further antagonize groups. Typically, they are held on the **sidewalk** facing John Ireland Boulevard, with the Cathedral as a backdrop. Most often these are related to abuse issues in the Church, though not always.

Last week, a small protest was held under the auspices of the **American Indian Movement (AIM)**. Given the news about unmarked graves being discovered in some of the historic Canadian residential schools, it was logically inferred that this was the primary reason. Still, it was not entirely clear how the protest related to the Cathedral. **Speeches** were given, **signs** were held, and chalk messages written on the concrete. Some are calling upon the U.S. Congress to approve a national truth and healing commission related to our past. This is precisely the type of **redress** that our founding fathers envisioned. And there’s a process for this. Marvelously enshrined in our founding documents, it presumes that the political process functions in a **respectful and civil** manner. Such is too often not the case—and it was surely **nowhere** to be found here.

After the speeches had concluded and many (including our security) had dispersed, **vandalism** occurred in the form of **painted handprints** on the granite walls and wood doors, as well as a few **eggs smashed** into the doors. It is extremely difficult to remove these stains from wood. The stone mostly cleaned up with some good old-fashioned elbow grease. Three Cathedral staff members were occupied the **entire morning** of July 2 with clean up. I spent many hours reviewing video footage, compiling a complete report. The damage will require some refinishing of the wood front doors. Having assisted during Holy Week at native Canadian parishes five times in the 1990’s in the **Northwest Territories**, I have a basic understanding of the underlying issues. The co-Cathedral in Yellowknife, NWT—which I have visited- was deliberately set afire last week; thankfully, it was quickly contained by alert neighbors.

A delegation of Indigenous Canadians will be meeting with Pope Francis in late 2021 (due to Covid travel restrictions) to foster meaningful encounters of dialogue and healing. The Canadian Bishops arranged for a visit of **three** distinct groups: **First Nations, Métis and Inuit**, noting: “This pastoral visit will include the participation of a diverse group of Elders/Knowledge Keepers, residential school survivors and youth from across the country, accompanied by a small group of Bishops and Indigenous leaders.” I ministered amongst the Métis, a people with mixed European and Indigenous ancestry, located mostly in Western Canada. Archbishop Hebda’s offer of a **written statement** to be read at the event expressing his “sincerest apology for any misdeeds of those acting on behalf of the Church that betrayed our commitment to the sacredness of life and to the respect for the human person” was refused. How truly disappointing.

Coincidentally, I was celebrating a special Mass for an organization going on at the exact same time. Some who had been unable to attend the Mass arrived afterwards for the program, finding the doors locked. If we so choose, our new push bars allow exiting, but not entering. Sadly, I was unaware that some were arriving late, as we had provided instructions for those attending Mass on how to access Hayden Hall from within the church. Some of our **guests** were subject to **verbal taunts** of the **vilest** nature, simply while trying to enter the Church. I was **mortified** and felt **partially responsible**. One posted video shows me in discussion with a police officer, with the narrator saying extremely inappropriate comments about priests—hardly a surprise! If AIM believes that they helped their cause in any way, they are sorely mistaken. On the contrary, they hurt it.

Whither civil discourse today? Where may it be found? On TV talk shows? Are you kidding? On the U.S. Senate floor or in congressional chambers? Think again. On the steps of the Cathedral? Nope—it has all but vanished and we are a weaker nation because of it. It is akin to **spitting in the wind**—going nowhere but back in one’s

own face. People who have worked in the security industry for decades have told me that they have **never seen things worse** than at present. As a result, I will continue discussions at the Parish Council and Finance Council levels about the **need for increased security** here, beyond our current set-up. This was a real missed opportunity for some honest dialogue. Hurling **invective** at innocent bystanders is counterproductive and symbolic of just how much **work** lies ahead.

- We welcome **Jim Gajewski** to the Cathedral as our new Business Administrator. With a background in Catholic health care management, Catholic Charities and parish administration, Jim is well qualified to take on this role. He comes to us from Holy Cross parish in NE Minneapolis.
- I derive not a scintilla of joy in seeing that several lay officials (and two clerics) have been indicted following a **two-year investigation** into Vatican financial dealings. A full accounting (pun intended!) needs to occur, with **accepted protocols** put in place to assure the faithful that their donations are handled appropriately. **Peter's Pence** donations ought never be the subject of speculative investments!
- **Pope Francis** is recovering following intestinal surgery, deemed necessary due to **diverticulitis**. Thankfully, it is during the quietest time of the Church year. May he enjoy a full and speedy recovery.
- This week's Major League **All-Star Game** only conjures up the reality of a most disappointing Twins season, not to mention the controversial decision to relocate the game due to Georgia's new voting law. I simply shake my head— I just want to play ball!
- **That face!** In the past six weeks, the “Cathedral” Fox has more than doubled in weight and regained both his color and strength. (See below) He's now set to be released back into the wild. He was selected to be photographed by **Joel Sartore** for inclusion in the **National Geographic Photo Ark**. I was invited to assist in the shoot! Check out the link— it is amazing! The Photo Ark photos will debut in 2022.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector