

## Notes from the Bishop's Desk

Bishop Timothy L. Doherty

November 29, 2020

The U.S. Bishops Conference (USCCB.org) held a virtual meeting on November 16 and 17 following a series of online committee meetings and reports. The fall meeting has been held in Washington or Baltimore for decades, so this was a departure. Much of it was livestreamed to the public. I will only note several things here. First, the McCarrick report was released the previous week, so that was part of our conversation.

Second, I ended about nine years of committee work. I am not presently taking new Conference duties outside the diocese. Shortly after I was named a bishop, Archbishop Sambini, the Apostolic Nuncio, personally directed me to get active in the Conference. This is a part of a bishop's role that is sometimes underappreciated. It adds more to his ministry than it takes away in terms of time and energy. My time with the Committee on Doctrine, the Catholic Health Association Trustees, and the Committee on Child Protection brought me into contact with men and women of real faith and talent.

Third, Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Pierre's address to the U.S. bishops on November 16 was, as ever, substantive and encouraging. While it has been reported in part, the text can be found at:

<http://nuntiususa.comcastbiz.net/pdf/homelies/11-16USCCB2020NovemberPlenaryAssembly.pdf>

His address highlighted the emphases of Pope Francis's October encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* –“Brothers all,” a phrase used by St. Francis himself. These writings are instructive for all of us in the Church.

In light of our Uniting in Heart efforts in our diocese, it is worth quoting a paragraph from the archbishop's talk:

“Pastoral conversion means working for justice and moving from maintenance to mission with respect to evangelization and parish life. In this regard, I recommend the new Instruction from the Congregation for the Clergy entitled ‘The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church,’ which emphasizes the renewal of parish structures to better proclaim the Word of God, offer the sacraments, and witness to charity.” [italics in original]

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We are moving from the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe to the First Sunday of Advent. While media and commerce flash Christmas (or something like it) incessantly, we should refuse to lose the present to which the Advent Season lays claim. We live in the ‘already and not yet’ of Christ's redemptive action. Maybe COVID has this Advent aspect: a people in darkness is awaiting a great light.

The 1925 proclamation of the Solemnity of Christ the King by Pius XI was framed by times much like ours: wars, depressions, a world epidemic, and the rise of populist governments in Russia and Italy, the Cristero Rebellion in Mexico 1917-1929, and then fascism in Spain and Germany in the 1930's. The pope was clear that Christ's kingdom was not a worldly one, not one about geography. In his mind, parties or governments would take the power of faith and free-will if surrendered to them by the people. Making Christ the hope and leader in every aspect of personal and communal life was and is essential in the life of each Christian and practicing Catholic (who are Christian by definition).

As the priest Origen (d.245) wrote, the kingship of Christ must exist in our mouth and our heart. There should be in us a “spiritual paradise where God may walk and be our sole ruler with his Christ.”

Happy Thanksgiving to you, and prayers for a fruitful Advent.