

16th A

July 17, 2011

From the Office of the Archbishop

Dear Fr. Bill Stockelman,

It has come to my attention that the Archdiocese of Cincinnati has a higher than normal rate of human weakness, failings and sin. Therefore I am mandating that you and every pastor find a method to cleanse your parish—especially Sunday Eucharist--of all the weak, messed-up, and struggling members. You may accomplish this in whatever way you deem most effective. I expect written feedback about your progress by July 18. Sincerely, Archbishop Dennis Schnurr

Well, this is what we'll do. I hope it is acceptable to the Archdiocese. Very simply, I will announce a sin, and whoever has committed that sin in the last two weeks, will simply get up and leave. Road rage last two weeks, please leave. Impure thought last two weeks, please leave. Cursing last two weeks, see you later. Way too much to eat or drink last two weeks, sorry. Stole something at work last two weeks, find your car. Lost control on a date, adios amigo. Lost \$700.00 at casino, farewell....came late to Mass no matter what the reason...attacked the other political party, the other skin color....squeezed the toothpaste in the middle.

"Dear Archbishop, There is no one left. The weeds are gone, but the church is empty. The pastor was the first to leave. We are advertising for perfect, worthy Catholics, but the phones are quiet. Love, Fr. Bill Stockelman" [pause]

That is a good exercise—because it is easy to slip into judging others—as if we were entirely without fault. As if we knew all the facts about any other person or group. As if God had put me or you in charge of judging.

To me, one of the best parts of the Catholic Church is that we don't go around saying, "We're saved." Instead, we come to Mass and cry out, "Lord have mercy. Lord I am not worthy to receive you." We ask God to be patient and lenient with us, and we try to be the same with others. God makes the rain fall and the sun shine on the wheat and the weeds, on the good and the bad. God puts up with all of us, even with me.

In the parable, an "enemy" sowed weeds throughout the field. Who might the "enemy" be today? The enemy is not the other political party, or the president or the governor. The enemy is not the other accent or skin color or religion. The real enemy has a capital "E"—the Evil One, the Opponent, who would love nothing more than to turn America or the whole world into a battleground of fear, anger and hate.

No. At Mass, we say to our neighbor "Peace be with you!" and we mean peace to every person on earth. Before Communion, we pray "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!" and before we receive, we all—all—pray "Lord I am not worthy to receive You, but only say the word and I shall be healed!"