

The Church of Saint Pascal Baylon

Fr. Mike Byron, Pastor: Sunday Homily

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Wednesday night, a little before 10:00 PM, I was driving home from an evening out and I was the lone car stopped at a traffic light on 5th and St. Peter downtown, just outside the St. Paul Hotel. As I waited for the signal to change, all at once—as if out of nowhere—a crowd of at least a few hundred protesters appeared coming up the hill right in front of me, marching and chanting and holding signs expressing their anger about the outcome of the election this week. They filled the street from curb to curb. There was no place for me to go as they swiftly moved into the intersection where I was, and suddenly I and my car were in the middle of a very loud and impassioned scene. For a few minutes I was surrounded by the people passing by. And thankfully they did pass me by. Only one person slapped his hand on my car trunk as he marched, but otherwise nobody was interested in my presence there. It was kind of surreal, because it was so disruptive of what I've come to know as the relative peace and quiet of downtown St. Paul after dark.

I don't enjoy disruptions of what have become my expectations about how life works, or ought to work. I think that's true for with us. And that's why it can be easy to become fearful or panicked when we are confronted with events and situations that come upon us before we can make any sense of them: A terminal illness, the death of a loved one, the sudden loss of a job, the end of a marriage, the betrayal of a sacred trust, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and yes, unexpected political events. Very often, surprise is not something that people appreciate, because it reminds us of how little control we actually have over a whole lot of our existence. We'd prefer to think otherwise.

And into all this chaos steps Jesus to announce that even in the midst of all such disorienting experience, we are safe if we cling tightly to him.

He tells his audience today that buildings will crumble, conflicts will flare up, disasters will occur, and we will all be presented with reasons to wonder whether God can be trusted. The answer is yes, not because it will always be obvious, but because the Lord has promised.

But we have more than his word to rely upon for that, we have our own experience of Christian community, most especially here at St. Pascal's, where we don't *escape* the sometimes baffling disruptions of life, but where we can always be welcomed and consoled in the very midst of them. This place, these people, are very source of sacred hope and trust for others, especially when things seem so unstable. It is *vital* that we are here, for each other and for the East Side.