

From Fr. Fleming's Desk

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I write these letters 5-6 days ahead of your receiving them because of the deadline each week with our bulletin company. Thus, I'm not sure what might transpire at the US Bishops meeting between the time of my writing this and it being in your hands. As of the moment, I know that at the last minute the Vatican intervened and insisted that our bishops not vote on two proposals that they were to consider this week with regard to clergy sexual abuse and the present crisis in our church.

The Vatican's intervention asked the US bishops to wait until after a February convocation of all the presidents of bishops conferences around the world meet in Rome to consider the same issues. My guess, my hope about all this, runs along these lines:

- regardless of how you may judge how our bishops have responded to the abuse crisis, they and the policies they have put in place are far ahead of other bishops around the world - in fact the US bishops and their work to date will provide a model for the February meeting
- other bishops' conferences in other cultures have very differing reactions and responses to the crisis and in many cases a lot of education is in order
- it's my hope that the February meeting in Rome will level the playing field by bringing other national bishops conferences up to speed - and, indeed, this might have to happen by mandate
- it's possible that in light of this, Pope Francis has asked the US bishops to refrain from enacting policies until a time when such policies might be more universally put in place.

That's my hope. That's my prayer. Like you, I rely on what I read in the media. Pastors have no inside lines of information. My hope is that the US bishops will, this week, continue to consider the proposals on their agenda even without taking a final vote. By the time you read this letter, I pray we will all have more information that will be helpful and hopeful.

As you know, we had a parish retreat this past weekend, the second in less than a year's time. It was a small group on retreat but the experience and benefits were great indeed. In one of our small group conversations over the weekend, a retreatant shared with us something he prays every morning. I found his prayer to be rich, indeed, and certainly worth sharing with a larger audience.

**Lord,
please put in my life today
the people, places and things I need
to help me love and be loved
as you love me.
Amen.**

And please join me in praying for our Church: for those who have suffered abuse and for our bishops and all who are working for change to restore our trust in the Church and its mission!

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming

