

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

In today's first reading, we hear expressed some of the growing pains experienced by the early Church. There was a tension between those who had become Christian but who still subscribed to dimensions of the Mosaic Law. The natural dissension arose out of the understanding of Christians who had Jewish origins who still held to the belief that salvation was attainable only through strict observance of the Mosaic Law. Clearly, this would have caused difficulty for the emerging Gentile Christian communities from Lystra, Icononium, Pisidian Antioch to Perga. One outgrowth of the disagreements taking place in the various Christian communities was the emergence for the first time of ecclesiastical or Church governance.

Representatives of the various communities were appointed to go to Jerusalem to meet with the elders to find resolution to outstanding issues. This meeting became known as the Council of Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas represented the Antiochene community. An essential result of this Council was that decisions of the Church are ultimately decided by the Holy Spirit. This is important because it reminds us, even in our day and generation, that discernment and decision-making within the Christian context must be predicated upon the movements of grace and the Holy Spirit. Another significant aspect of this Council was the decision not to impose any undue burdens upon the people beyond the sacrosanct laws of that time. This reflects what Jesus himself stated so many times in reference to the Pharisees and Scribes. "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them?" This is a reminder to us that as Christians our first call is to be humble servants proclaiming the Good News, bringing people closer to Our Lord rather than alienating them from his merciful love.

This last point is determinative of what we hear in today's Gospel from John. Jesus tells his disciples: "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." These words of consolation serve to remind us that the Lord is ever present to us, even in those times of upheaval and maelstroms of our lives when He seems remote and distant. His admonition to not be afraid should give us the confidence to trust in and seek Him who fills the emptiness and longing we often feel as human beings. Surrendering ourselves to Him alone brings us deep and lasting peace!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who organized and served at the Mass of Thanksgiving and reception for Rita Carroll last Sunday. It was beautiful so see so many alumni, families and friends return home to Saint Pius to celebrate and pay tribute to a truly remarkable woman. I am grateful that Father Paul returned and preached the homily. It was a great day to remember all of those individuals who have worked to make Saint Pius a truly special community of faith. Thanks, too, to the many parishioners who attended the Ordination of our three new brother priests last Saturday. I was truly edified by the witness of our parishioners in supporting our brothers as they begin their priestly ministry. Please continue to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Our parish festival is fast approaching. I want to thank the many volunteers who are working to ensure a successful weekend. I am appealing to you—our parishioners—to volunteer in some way that weekend. Please take a look at the back of the bulletin to see where we still need volunteers. This is a parish event and so I ask that we all take some share and responsibility for ensuring a great weekend. We all need to chip in and help—that is part of being a family. You can go to <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/70AOC4DACAB229-stpius3> to view which booths have openings and to volunteer!!! Please know I am so grateful for all that you do to support our common mission!!!

