

**For The Bulletin Of
June 16, 2019**



From Father Robert

On this feast of the Trinity we read from the Gospel of John. Some modern readers of the New Testament are often surprised that the word “trinity” does not appear in the Bible at all, not in the New Testament and certainly not in the Old Testament. The term “Trinity” is a Latin-based word from *trinitas*, meaning the number three or a triad. It can also mean the state of being threefold, or triple. It’s a term that later Christian theologians, particularly in the patristic era, coined to talk about God, and the relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit. So, though the New Testament has many texts that speak of God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, it never refers to them as Trinity.

Today’s gospel reading is one such where Jesus the Son is speaking, making reference to the Spirit of Truth and to the Father. As such, this is one of many texts that church fathers used to develop the theology of the Trinity. And that theology developed over centuries with many roadblocks, hurdles, and missteps, but also many advances, developments, and clarifications along the way. One conclusion from the theological developments is that the doctrine of the Trinity is sophisticated, subtle, and worthy of reflection. There is a dynamic

relationship between the three “persons” of the Trinity that is expressed in a variety of ways in different scriptural passages. Today’s passage from John gives us some of the subtlety of the relationships among the three that will be explored for centuries.

In this passage, we have the “Spirit of Truth” rather than the more standard or classical, Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of Truth has a particular role, which is to guide the disciples to truth, speaking what is heard from the Father and the Son. The Spirit of Truth also glorifies the Son. He takes from the Son, Who has everything the Father has, and declares it to the disciples.

This is only a four-verse passage! Consider how much more there is in the New Testament about the relationships between Father, Son, and Spirit! Rather than a mathematical formula to be explained and known, the Trinity is a short-hand expression for the dynamic relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit. We reflect on this relationships and we will never exhaust it. We drink from the wellsprings of Scripture, which never run dry.



Living The Paschal Mystery

One challenge we have in discussing the Trinity is that we’ve been given so many images and metaphors for it. For example, it’s been said that St. Patrick

used the shamrock, a three-leaved clover, to teach the natives about the Trinity. But of course God is more than three leaves, and each “person of the Trinity” has a more dynamic relationship than leaves on a shamrock. Some church fathers used the image of the sun for the Trinity, saying that the Father was like the sun itself, the Son the light, and the Spirit the heat. All three are in dynamic relation, but the sun itself is primary. This is a better image than a shamrock, but expresses the three persons as inanimate objects. Something similar happens when modern thinkers imagine the Trinity as the three modes of water in a liquid, solid, and gaseous state, but all at once!

The many images of Trinity and each of them incomplete in one way or another contribute to a fundamental challenge in discussing Trinity. Ultimately it is best to go back to Scripture itself, and let that inform our understanding, which we do today by reading from the Gospel of John.

- In the psalm we hear the psalmist marvel at the works of creation. When have you experienced wonder and awe in nature?
- St. Paul tells us today that we can boast in our affliction because “affliction produces endurance.” When have you experienced affliction in your life that, looking back on, you can see made you stronger?
- In your prayer, which member of the Trinity do you address the most often? Why do you think this is?
- How has your understanding of the Trinity grown throughout your life?



About Liturgy: Join In The Dance!

In the 4th century, the Cappadocian Fathers developed a systematic theological connection between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Their focus on the dynamic relationship among the divine persons led them to a description of the Trinity that was more an action than a definition. The interdependency and ongoing mutual self-giving in love of the divine persons not only made the Trinity One but also clarified each person as individuals. Their intimate relationship is a permeation of self, one with the other, but without any kind of confusion or blurring of self.

All this sounds quite complex! Perhaps a better image inspired by the Cappadocian Fathers to describe the dynamism of this divine relationship is *perichoresis* (*perry-chor-ee-sis*) translated by some as a circle dance. Each person contributes to a part of the dance and has a specific role in the choreography, but the entire group together and what they do together make up the dance. The partners pull and push against one another, not in resistance or by force but in support and unity. The dance is in constant motion, and the dancers are always focused on the other and not themselves. Moreover, the circle is never closed; the joy and unity of the dance and the dancers draw others into the circle to become part of the dance as well.

Our celebration of the Trinity today gives us a moment to look at how we embody the open and intimate dynamism of the Trinity in our relationships with one another, especially in the ritual steps of the liturgy. Do our processions look like a joyful movement of gathering and sending? Can people feel connected to one another in the liturgy, or are there physical, psychological or spiritual barriers that keep people inwardly focused on themselves or separated by status, distance, or disability? Do guests feel drawn in, and do they find a space ready and waiting for them so they can feel at home and part of the dance of the Trinity?



The Floral Arrangement before the Altar today is placed to the Glory of God and in Honor of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Marriage of Joe and Crystal Stahl. Congratulations and may God continue to bless you with all that is necessary for strong faith, hope, and love for all the years that are yet to be!



Parish Hosts End of School Year BBQ Luncheon

Los Medanos Village is a 71 unit affordable housing unit in Pittsburg. Contra Costa Interfaith Housing provides case management and coordinates a highly successful after school homework program for the children. On Wednesday, June 5, a group of parishioners prepared a BBQ luncheon to celebrate the conclusion of another successful year for the students in the homework program and to thank the incredible volunteer tutors who do a wonderful job as mentors. The menu included hamburgers, veggie burgers and hot dogs with sliced tomatoes, lettuce, pickles and onions to top them off. A variety of potato and corn chips, ice cold watermelon wedges and cookies completed the fare. At the conclusion of lunch, all of the students were honored individually for their accomplishments. This is the eighth year in a row that our parish hosted this event for some wonderful families. Many thanks to **Sue & Rick Howell** and **Vicki & Brian McCoy** for their hard work and contributions to this parish outreach project.



Our parish could not accomplish all it does were it not for the great number of volunteers who do so much throughout

each week: those who clean and prepare the church for each weekend: **Angela Bueno, Carole Miller, Jun Bajet, Jean Rogers, Mencey Osborne, Nancy Santos, Alfred Madoshi, and Al Cosce.** ...those who clean and maintain the bathrooms throughout the week: **Rose Salamanca, Steve Rojek, Mary Ewing, Patricia Britton, and Father Robert.** ...to **Dilcia Aparicio** who does such an excellent job of washing, ironing, and caring for the Sacred Linens. ...to our Sacristans and Altar Guild who prepare the sanctuary for the celebration of Eucharist each week: **Peter Degl'Innocenti, Pam and Rich Confetti, Vincent Rodriguez, Harlan Young, Monika Kauer, Cynthia Enrique, Nancy Santos and Rose Salamanca.** ...to **our counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections. ...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week: **Frances Rojek, Mel Costanza, Maryann Peddicord, Estrella Rusk, Rowena Cayaban, Alicia Perez, Joe Fanfa, Bev Iacona and Paul Riofski.** ...to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last week's donations: **Frank Zamora and Barbara Jackson.** ...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Dave Costanza (Lead), Kathy Augusta, Vince Augusta and Sherry Webb.** ...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who keeps watch over our vehicles during the weekend Liturgies: **Don Benson, Steve Rojek and Jose Perez.**



Restroom Etiquette

From time to time it is important to be reminded about the use of the bathrooms provided as a courtesy to our parishioners and guests.

MEN/BOYS

We are experiencing a serious issue regarding the use of the urinal. We are constantly finding urine on the floor in front of the urinal. If you miss the urinal and urinate on the floor, please get paper towels and wipe up the floor. People are stepping in the urine and carrying it on the bottom of their shoes and this becomes a real health hazard.

WOMEN/GIRLS

Over the last several weeks, there has continued to be a serious issue of those using the toilets not flushing as well as using entire rolls of toilet paper at one time and then clogging up the toilet. It is very disrespectful of others coming in after you and finding such a mess. A plunger is provided in the women's restroom for you to use to unplug the toilet should it become necessary. Please do not throw an entire roll of toilet paper into the toilet. Also please make use of the receptacles provided for feminine products and do not throw tampons into the toilet.

The restrooms are cleaned every Saturday morning by the cleaning crew as well as on Monday mornings and at

other times during the week as necessary. We work very hard to make sure they are clean and disinfected. Please do your part to help us keep them clean.



Thank You Knights of Columbus

I would like to thank the following Knights who helped to make the first Tri-Tip Weekend a success: **Jim Tomlins, Ron Yarolimek, PGK Bill Barbanica, DGK Vince Augusta, Patrick McConnell, Marc Douville, Tony Gumina, Clem Bushman, Sean Dunleavy, FS Steve Rojek, Phil Rios, Adam Haas, Ernie Ameral, Bob Plurkowski, PGK Dave Simpson, Godfrey Nwosu, Jose Palomino, and GK Tim Cox.**



Our parish has been blessed by the ministry of Fr. Ricardo Chavez and he would like you to know that he had surgery for lung cancer last Tuesday, June 4th, and is healing nicely. He would appreciate our continued prayers for healing.

Editorial: Francis treats church's internal 'sickness'

Francis has no intention of shrinking from the difficult task of changing a deeply entrenched culture

Jun 7, 2019

by [NCR Editorial Staff](#)

With Pope Francis, the Catholic community is re-learning both the limits of papal power as well as the persuasive reach of papal imagination and symbol. We've seen the latter before, especially during the reign of Pope John Paul II. He had no global mandate from any world body, but his presence and actions on the world stage contributed to historic changes in both civil and religious realms. He confronted communism in a unique way, and he forever clothed the words of *Nostra Aetate*, the document reforming the church's relationship with non-Christian religions, in unmistakable reality with bold gestures of cooperation with other world religions.

That example would have been impossible without the groundbreaking work of Vatican II, the multi-year council of the early 1960s that laid the foundation for ongoing reform. Current wisdom often holds that young Catholics have no memory of that council, are beyond its arguments and tensions and are wont to move on to a more placid Catholic reality. They may not have the same "issues" as their parents and grandparents, but make no mistake, they are living the working out of that council in ways their forebears could only have imagined.

While John Paul II established the church as a global force in a new way,

he left the institution divided and at odds with itself. As the unmasking of the hierarchical culture reveals, he also left a church deeply corrupt and compromised at the highest levels.

Francis bears the burden of effecting interior change, of getting at the soft-tissue reforms that require the instincts of a pastor schooled in matters of the human heart. It is the more difficult task, by far, because it requires rethinking, at the most fundamental level, what it means to be an ordained cleric in the Roman Catholic Church and what it means to be Catholic.

If on the global stage John Paul went where popes previously had not gone, Francis is approaching reform of the interior life of the church in ways that are shocking the system. Read about a [new proposed apostolic constitution](#) on reform of the Curia. It emphasizes service and the need to include laypeople, especially women, in church governance.

In an analysis, [ecclesiologist Richard Gaillardetz writes](#): "In the prologue of the constitution, we already encounter what will be the overarching theme of the document, its reconception of the work of the Curia as an exercise not in domination and control but in Christian service inspired by Jesus' ministry of foot-washing."

What remains to be seen is how bishops worldwide react to the constitution as they receive copies of the proposal. But the language is that of the reformer who, it is said, in the week before he was elected pope, sealed his fate with a talk to fellow cardinals that diagnosed the church's "sickness" as rooted in a preoccupation with self-preservation.

"The evils that, over time, happen in ecclesial institutions have their root in self-referentiality and a kind of theological narcissism," he said. "In Revelation, Jesus says that he is at the door and knocks. Obviously, the text refers to his knocking from the outside in order to enter, but I think about the times in which Jesus knocks from within so that we will let him come out. The self-referential church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out," he wrote.

He described two images of the church, one a church that "comes out of herself" and another, "the worldly church, living within herself, of herself, for herself." The going out — evangelization — in his construct meant going "to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery." The irony, of course, is that requisite for such going out — this is not the evangelization of totting up newly won souls — would be a deep change not only of ruling structures in the church but also, more importantly, a change of heart of those inhabiting the structures. Half a century out, we are working on the most profound levels of Vatican II reform. So a pope on a plane is able to say what previously would have been unthinkable: "The tradition of the church is always in movement. The tradition does not safeguard the ashes." Francis spoke those words recently in a [stinging rebuke of Catholic fundamentalists](#) who yearn to "safeguard the ashes." Tradition, instead, he said, "is the guarantee of the future." He is turning on its head the idea that developed (and to an absurd degree in

the United States) that equated tradition with a strange list of orthodoxies that became determinant for some segments of the church of whether an individual could be counted in or out of the community.

Francis has changed the image for the community from one of rigid boundaries and border-patrolling bishops to a community of movement and accompaniment. He is moving us from a God of transactions to a God of transformation.

The need has been long understood. In an eerie example of art preceding life, novelist Morris West in *Lazarus*, one of his papal novels, depicts a cardinal who has come to a personal reckoning with his career, having a frank conversation about the failed hierarchical approach with a pope newly open to the conversation as he is about to undergo a major heart operation.

"You and I, all of us, Curia and hierarchy alike, are the nearly perfect products of our Roman system," the cardinal tells the pope. "We never fought it. We marched with it every step of the way. We cauterized our emotions, hardened our hearts, made ourselves eunuchs for the love of God! ... and somewhere along the way, very early I think, we lost the simple art of loving." The people, he said, "want care and compassion and love and a hand to lead them out of the maze. Does yours? Does mine? I think not."

The existential threat against which West sets his main character in this 1990 novel was a radical Islamic group. The more imminent existential threat to the church today is the corruption evident in the clerical/hierarchical cultures.

Francis may not tick off all the boxes of all the interest groups in this raucous and divided community. He may make errors. It is clear, however, that he has no intention of shrinking from the difficult task of changing a deeply entrenched culture. He has allowed the community to entertain disturbing, if fundamental, questions. What is legitimate tradition? What of the tradition gives nourishment? What are the ashes we should leave behind? Fiction, perhaps, anticipated the big questions. It doesn't hold the answers. The illness, acquired over centuries, is not easily cured. It is encouraging to see Francis commencing the work and inviting the rest of us to join.

'Let's not wait for the theologians,' says Pope Francis about sharing the Eucharist

Jun 6, 2019

by [Thomas Reese, Religion News Service](#)

On the plane returning to Rome from Romania, Pope Francis made an extraordinary statement on the role of theology in ecumenical relations at his press conference June 2.

In the past, church officials have stressed the need for theological agreement before Christian unity or Eucharistic sharing could be possible.

As a result, the Catholic Church is involved in extensive and complex theological dialogues with other Christian churches. These dialogues have made great progress in dealing with issues raised by the Reformation, but new issues (women's ordination, gay marriage, abortion) have arisen that

divide the churches. This makes it very difficult to reach a final agreement.

But Francis told reporters on the plane, "Ecumenism is not getting to the end of discussions, it's done walking together," according to [Crux](#). The journey is more important than the destination.

As a result, Francis stresses the ecumenism of shedding blood together and of working together in service to the poor, the sick and the marginalized. This fits with his famous statement that "facts are more important than ideas." How we live our faith is more important than how we explain it.

But during the press conference Francis went further. As he explained on the plane, "there is already Christian unity," according to the [National Catholic Reporter](#). "Let's not wait for the theologians to come to agreement on the Eucharist."

Is the pope signaling his willingness to move toward Eucharistic sharing without total theological agreement?

This would be consistent with everything else he is saying. If it is the journey, not the destination, that is important, then why not share food during the trip? Why wait until we arrive?

Such a view would see the Eucharist as a unifying sacrament rather than a celebration of unity. Ironically, during his visit, theological divisions made it impossible for the pope even to pray the Lord's Prayer with Romanian Orthodox Patriarch Daniel, as right-wing Orthodox objected to their praying together. As a result, the pope prayed it first in Latin,

followed by the patriarch saying it in Romanian.

But the pope revealed that from what he could see, most of the people at the service in the Orthodox cathedral prayed both times.

"The people went beyond us leaders," explained Francis. Likewise, in the Catholic Church, the people often lead the way and the theologians follow, not the other way around.

Bankers started charging interest on loans before theologians distinguished interest from usury. Scientists knew the Earth revolved around the sun before biblical scholars applied literary criticism to Genesis. American Catholics embraced religious freedom before the church caught up at Vatican II.

Today, Catholics are encouraging their Protestant spouses to join them at Communion. Divorced and remarried Catholics are returning to Communion. Gay couples approach Communion ministers together. Catholic couples are practicing contraception.

The laity have moved forward; they are not waiting for theologians or the hierarchy to lead them. They are waiting for them to catch up.

***Conservatives still rule the US
bishops' conference
Change 'takes a long time,' say
veteran bishop watchers
Jun 3, 2019
by [Heidi Schlumpf](#)***

At the U.S. bishops' meeting in November 2017, as the prelates voted in the much-anticipated election for chair of their pro-life committee, the ballot offered a stark choice: one candidate a culture warrior who emphasized opposition to abortion; the other, more moderate, took a "seamless garment" approach that connects life issues.

The latter, Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, had "seniority," given his red hat, but Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, had been given a plug by the committee's current chair right before the vote.

The final tally — 96 to 82, with about 48 unofficially abstaining by not voting — was close, but Cupich lost, even though [historically](#) that committee has always been headed by a cardinal. The results proved that progressive prelates didn't have the numbers to control the leadership of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, not to mention its statements, policies and priorities.

And they still don't, according to bishop watchers and a recent study of the U.S. episcopacy. The makeup of the 441-member bishops' conference, especially the 273 active bishops eligible to vote, obviously influences discussion and policies, including those proposed about sex abuse that have been slated for consideration at the bishops' upcoming June meeting in Baltimore.

The U.S. bishops' conference still leans to the right, observers say, especially after two papacies — including one that lasted 27 years — in which most episcopal appointments included an orthodoxy litmus test.

That isn't undone in just six years of a more moderate papacy like that of Pope Francis, said Jesuit Fr. Tom Reese, author of several books on the organization and politics of the church. If there is a tipping point at which the bishops' conference becomes more progressive, the church hasn't hit it yet. "It takes a long time to change," he told NCR. "If Pope Francis gets another six years, I think we will see a dramatic change. But it takes a while."

Rightward slant

Reese, who has been covering the bishops as a [commentator](#) for more than four decades, believes the U.S. bishops can be roughly divided into thirds: one-third who are ideologically conservative, one-third who are what he terms "pastorally conservative," and one-third who are more moderate.

There are virtually no "ideological liberals," he said. Even when the conference included more progressive bishops, most tended to be more pragmatic than ideological. Take the late Chicago Cardinal Joseph Bernardin: "He counted the votes and went for what he thought was possible and what he could get Rome to go along with," Reese recalled. "It's hard to think of [liberal bishops] who stood up and challenged the pope the way these ideological conservatives today have."

Today's ideological conservatives are hard-liners unlikely to change their

views, and they don't like Francis, Reese said. But he believes the "pastoral conservatives" are more "confused" by Francis and could be brought along with a more progressive agenda on some issues.

Yet there are few progressive leaders among the U.S. bishops who could sway these less ideological bishops, Reese said. Because of their small numbers, progressive or even moderate prelates "don't even want to put up a fight," he said. "They've got better things to do with their lives than bang their heads against the wall."

A new book profiling the U.S. episcopacy confirms that the number of progressive bishops is small — only 17%, according to *Catholic Bishops in the United States: Church Leadership in the Third Millennium*, which features data from a 2016 survey of U.S. bishops conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). Those few progressive bishops tended to be older, clustered in a Vatican II-age cohort of priests ordained between 1964 and 1977. This mirrors earlier studies that show younger priests tend to be more traditional than their elder colleagues, said lead researcher Fr. Stephen Fichter, who worked on both surveys.

More than twice as many bishops surveyed (42%) said that others would describe their general theological orientation as "traditional." Another 41% said they were "moderate." These higher percentages came mostly from the post-Vatican II cohort, ordained between 1978 and 1991, and the millennial cohort, ordained after 1991.

However, the bishops' survey did not define the terms "traditional," "moderate" or "progressive," and Fichter notes that the question was broad. Some bishops may be liturgically conservative, but progressive on social justice issues, for example.

According to CARA, 20% of Latin rite U.S. bishops today were appointed by Francis, with the remaining 80% having been elevated by either Pope John Paul II or Pope Benedict XVI. At the time of the 2016 study, the percentages were: 13% by Pope Francis, 42% by Pope Benedict and 45% by John Paul II.

Despite a popular tendency to divide bishops into "Team Francis" and "Francis opponents," the study did not find a statistically significant difference in a prelate's theological orientation based on which pope appointed him, in part because Francis had appointed so few bishops, comparatively. Some Francis appointments also were men made bishops by previous popes who were simply promoted from auxiliary to ordinary or moved to a larger diocese.

Reese agrees that not all Francis appointees are necessarily liberal. In fact, he believes they are more likely to be moderate.

The survey did find that bishops appointed by Francis tend to have more pastoral experience.

But pitting John Paul II or Benedict and Francis bishops against each other isn't helpful, said Fichter. "I don't think they live it that way either," he said.

Culture warrior or culture of encounter

The division in the U.S. conference of bishops is less one of "liberal/conservative" or "John Paul II/ Francis," but rather between culture warriors and those who embrace the "[culture of encounter](#)," said Cathleen Kaveny, a law and theology professor at Boston College and longtime columnist on church affairs.

Bishops appointed by Francis "tend not to be locked into the old culture-war model," she told NCR. "They are not enough to take the majority, but I think they're coming."

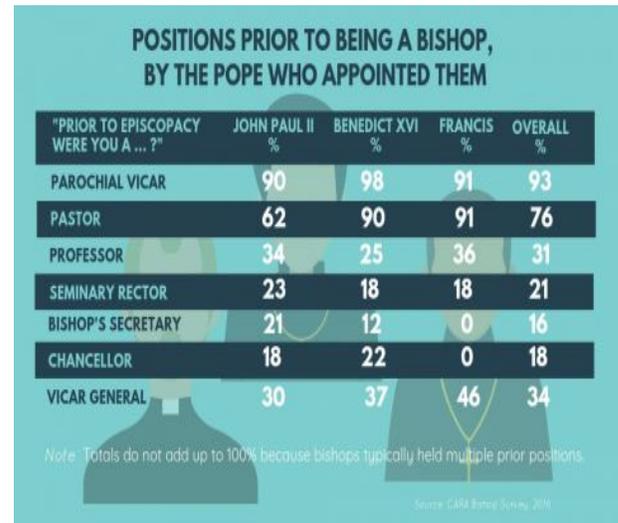
In contrast to the triumphal attitude of the culture warriors — which Kaveny believes "doesn't work post-sex-abuse" — the "culture of encounter" bishops have adopted Francis' image of the church as "[field hospital](#)," where there is "more room for grappling with the messy and complicated details of people's lives," she said.

But rather than engage in "fruitless fights," this smaller group of bishops — which can include both conservatives and liberals — are instead "changing the topic" and trying to model the "culture of encounter in their own dioceses," Kaveny said.

This attitude may come from pastoral experience, as fewer of Francis' appointments come straight from high-powered positions in chanceries, according to the CARA study.

In the past, a typical "career path" for a U.S. bishop was to graduate from a high school seminary, spend some time studying at the North American College

in Rome, then perhaps serve as a bishop's secretary, Fichter said. Other diocesan duties that have historically preceded an appointment as bishop include vicar general, chancellor, judicial vicar, vicar for clergy or seminary rector.



"Now it looks like they're moving away from that path," he said. "Pope Francis has said he wants bishops with the [smell of the sheep](#) on them. Our data does support that."

At the time of Fichter's research in 2016, none of the bishops named by Francis had served as bishop's secretary, as compared to one-fifth of John Paul II's appointments.

But 91% of Francis' appointees have served as pastors, compared to 62% under John Paul II.

Of course, "simply being a pastor does not necessarily mean you're pastoral," said Reese, who admits that the latter is more difficult to measure in a sociological study.

It's complicated

Describing bishops is often more complicated than simply pigeonholing them as "right" or "left," and can depend on the issue. And when the issue is clergy sex abuse, it may be even more complicated.

In 2002, when the bishops passed the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, zero tolerance for offenders — now universally supported — was seen as a "progressive" stance, in part because it was proposed by then-Bishop [Wilton Gregory](#), who is perceived as progressive, Reese recalled. Fast-forward a year from the pro-life committee chair vote, to the November 2018 meeting, when the U.S. bishops were discussing possible ways to close the loophole that excluded bishops from the charter's rules about clerical sex abuse. (The Vatican [prevented](#) them from actually voting on the proposals.)

The U.S. bishops' conference president, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston — seen as more traditionalist or moderate — spoke out in favor of a proposal that created a separate entity, a nonprofit that included laypeople, to address claims of abuse or cover-up by bishops. Cupich — often labeled liberal or progressive — instead proposed a plan that put "metropolitans" (bishops who head a geographic region, usually a state) in charge of dealing with accused bishops in his province.

Support for either proposal did not fall neatly into "conservative" or "progressive" camps, especially as [conservative groups are calling for more lay involvement](#) on sex abuse and other church issues. And the

metropolitan model proposed by Cupich did include dioceses' lay review boards. The metropolitan-vs.-new-nonprofit-entity debate may be more about subsidiarity or local power — "states' rights," if you will — Reese said, and bishops may "cross the aisle," on that or other issues.

When the vote comes during the June 11-14 meeting, any proposal that changes church law will need two-thirds — not a simple majority — for it to pass. That would be 182 yeases, assuming every bishop attends the meeting and votes.

If all this sounds like the body of bishops resembles another legislative body in the United States, Reese doesn't dispel the comparison to the U.S. Congress. "The church is a human institution," he said. "And votes matter."