



Bishop Joseph Strickland, who was removed from pastoral governance of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas, by Pope Francis Nov. 11, leads the recitation of the rosary Nov. 15 outside the site of the fall general assembly of the U.S. bishops in Baltimore. The bishops met there Nov. 13-16. (OSV News/Bob Roller)



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Holding his pectoral cross aloft and showing it to a reporter on the Baltimore waterfront, Bishop Joseph Strickland said he was not at the U.S. bishops' general assembly this week to seek attention for himself.



Bishop Joseph Strickland shows his pectoral cross on Nov. 14. (NCR photo/Brian Fraga)

"I'm accused of that all the time, but it's about Jesus Christ," Strickland told NCR as he was surrounded by about two dozen supporters, several of whom held signs declaring: "We stand with Bishop Strickland."

"(Jesus') truth has to be proclaimed," Strickland said. "If people listen to it. I'm willing to put up with what comes with it, which a lot does."

Pope Francis [removed](#) Strickland, 65, from leadership of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas, on Nov. 11, following a formal investigation into his management and leadership style.

Strickland's removal from episcopal ministry also followed a string of controversies in recent years in which he had taken to social media to attack Francis, accusing the pope of undermining the Catholic faith and endorsing a video that described the pontiff as a "diabolically disoriented clown."

Strickland's strident rhetoric and hardline positions may have torpedoed his episcopal career, but they also endeared him to conservative and right-wing Catholics who liked his outspoken and blunt approach to ecclesial and political matters.

Some of those supporters gathered in Baltimore, offering encouraging words and kneeling for Strickland's blessing. Less than 2 feet from where Strickland held court outside the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront hotel, some people knelt to pray in front of a gilded reliquary.

Next to them, a television reporter interviewed a man wearing a red "Trump 2024" hat and holding a sign that read, "We Love You, Bishop Strickland."

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Referring to himself as a "retired bishop," Strickland said he could have attended and participated in the bishops' Nov. 13-16 plenary [assembly](#), but told NCR that Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the Vatican's ambassador to the United States, had

discouraged him from doing so.

"I expected that," said Strickland, who added that he still traveled to Baltimore to pray. Strickland said he was not told why the pope "relieved" him from ministry. He pushed back against suggestions that he was in Baltimore, within a literal stone's throw of the bishops' meeting, to bring attention to himself.

"People can accuse you of a lot of things," he said. "I know where my heart is. I spent time with the Lord this morning. I know I'm just sharing his truth in a world that's trying to reject it."

This story appears in the **USCCB Fall Assembly 2023** feature series. [View the full series.](#)