News



by Heidi Schlumpf

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> "People across the board put issues in the box of their party, rather than listening in a comprehensive way to church teaching."
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> - San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy
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While on campus for a talk at the University of Notre Dame two weeks ago, Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego had lunch with students who asked what he thought was the most serious problem facing the country today.

His answer: the breakdown of our political culture that causes us to be estranged from each other.

This week, McElroy will give a deeper analysis of that breakdown and offer suggestions for addressing it in a talk on "Forming a Catholic Political Imagination" April 18 at Loyola University Chicago.

The bishop — who is sometimes identified as part of a group of "Pope Francis" bishops — will give the second "Cardinal Bernardin Common Cause Lecture" sponsored by Loyola's Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage. Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich gave the first one in 2017.

McElroy told NCR that the talk will examine how the Catholic Church — especially its virtue ethics — could help counter the polarization plaguing the United States.

The tendency today is "translate issues into the political structures of the day," he said during a question-and-answer session at Notre Dame. For example, those who support the church's teaching on abortion tend not to support church teaching on the environment, he said.

Such "cafeteria Catholicism" has become partisan, resulting in a lack of integrity when it comes to judging the actions of those from within and outside the political parties with which we affiliate, he said.

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"People across the board put issues in the box of their party, rather than listening in a comprehensive way to church teaching," he said.

One step toward healing such divisiveness is to gather differently-minded people together to share their personal stories. "That, to me, is by far the best way to make progress on these things," he said. "If you get them in the same room to talk to each other, partisanship tends to fall away."

The lecture series at Loyola is named after the work toward of the late Chicago Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, who sought to decrease polarization in the church through his Catholic Common Ground Initiative and to address social issues through a "seamless garment" approach.

The lecture will be held 4-6 p.m., Wed., April 18, in the McCormick Lounge of Coffey Hall on Loyola's Lake Shore Campus, 1032 W. Sheridan Rd. It is free and open to the public.

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