Opinion
NCR Voices



Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, speaks during a news conference at a Nov. 14, 2023, session of the bishops' fall general assembly in Baltimore. (OSV News/Bob Roller)



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Editor's note: *Every Tuesday, NCR columnist Michael Sean Winters sends out a newsletter to subscribers of his email list. We are publishing today's newsletter regarding the U.S. bishops' conference fall assembly. Click here to subscribe to future newsletters.*

Sometime this morning, here in Baltimore at the U.S. bishops' assembly, Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese of the Military Services will give his address as president of the conference.

It is scary to think what he will say.

Broglio did an interview with EWTN's Raymond Arroyo last week. It was appalling.

In discussing the election of Donald Trump, Broglio said at one point, "A third concern would be trying to reform the migration policy or the law of migration in this country so that migration can be orderly, that it be legal, and that some of the unrest that we've experienced at the border can be resolved."

No mention of the human dignity of the migrants. In fact, earlier in the interview he cited human dignity as one of the reasons Catholics voted for Trump. "I would think certainly our preeminent concern for the dignity of the human person is one thing that would have influenced those voters."

Apparently, the human dignity of migrants doesn't count, not with Trump-supporting Catholics and not with the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

There are two public policy issues about which there is near-unanimity among the U.S. bishops: abortion and immigration. As Catholics, we defend the unborn and the undocumented (and the unemployed and unhoused), all those who are defined in our society by what they lack, the "uns." Why did Broglio not link the two issues most prominent in the campaign and most unifying for the conference he leads? Is

he that terrified of challenging the incoming U.S. president?

Equally appalling were Broglio's comments about synodality.

Arroyo noted that the previous week, he had interviewed Cardinal Raymond Burke, who had said synodality was "undefined." Arroyo asked Broglio if that was true and the archbishop delivered something of a word salad and called it "a nebulous process."

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The archbishop was in the synod hall last month. He voted on the final document. Maybe he wasn't paying attention when they voted on No. 28 of that text, which states, "In simple and concise terms, it can be said that synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform to make the Church more participatory and missionary, that is, to make her more capable of walking with every man and woman radiating the light of Christ."

Yesterday, the U.S. bishops were in executive session, and as I discussed in my curtain raiser, Broglio was going to get an earful from his brother bishops about the conference's decision to cut the staff of the Justice, Peace and Human Development secretariat.

Specifically, many bishops were angry about one episode that occurred during the spring meeting in June. While the bishops discussed in executive session the future of one office in the secretariat, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Broglio did not share with his brother bishops his intention to eliminate half of the staff in the entire department. The bad blood from that sin of omission is palpable at this meeting.

The bishops need to overcome their internal divisions and do so quickly. The most immediate challenge facing the Catholic Church as a result of last week's U.S. election is the need to protect migrants from Trump's plans for mass deportation.

The business community does not want mass deportations. Plenty of moderate Republicans do not want it. The bishops need to make sure the incoming administration knows that the Catholic Church will do what it can to protect our people from any effort to enact mass deportation.

The bishops also should embrace the call by Cardinals Blase Cupich of Chicago and Robert McElroy of San Diego for the establishment of a permanent committee on synodality. Broglio was at the synod, also, but his interview with Arroyo showed how limited his enthusiasm is for this important reform of the church. The rest of the bishops need to choose whether they embrace Pope Francis' signature initiative or not.

That is the view from Baltimore as the public meetings begin later this morning. My NCR colleagues and I will be posting throughout the day as news breaks, so stay tuned.

This story appears in the **USCCB Fall Assembly 2024** feature series. View the full series.