

Pastoral Message: May 22, 2022

During Bible study this week, I was impressed that the people pointed out that the reading from Acts of the Apostles that we hear this weekend was synodality. They are right. This was the church's first synod. Perhaps this year, as a parish working on the synod, our experience of it sheds new light on what we hear today. One thing the scripture makes clear is that there was debate. We have debate in today's church. Pope Francis' advice to speak boldly and listen with charity can be helpful. Today in what we read, this was no small matter for them. Jesus, in his lifetime, would not have encouraged giving up Jewish dietary laws or circumcision. This was the work of the Holy Spirit that moved out beyond our Jewish brothers and sisters to share the good news with the Gentiles. I think it offers us an important lesson that the Holy Spirit is an agent of change, and so the church can change as it is guided by the Holy Spirit. We really have not been given a road map or a 5 year plan. We were never promised all the answers but what the origins of our faith remind us is that as we face new opportunities and challenges that the Holy Spirit would guide us and direct us. There was one person in Bible study that pointed out that the scripture says, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us." This is really synodality—that humans and God intermingle; that the Lord can speak through any of us and we are called to listen to one another and to the Lord who will direct us towards the future to carry out our mission.