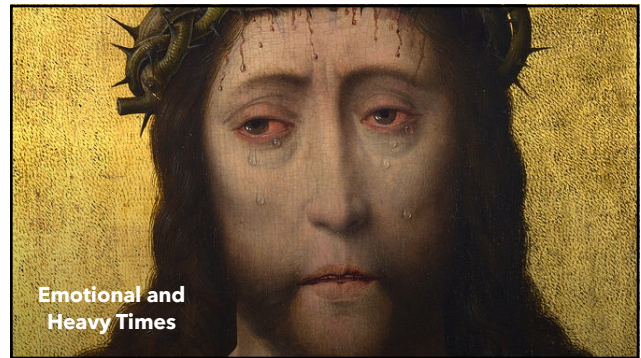
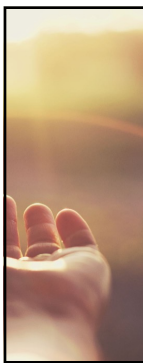




1



2



Prayer for Unity

Lord Jesus:
 In your life, you crossed over to the outcast.
Help us to be one.
 In your teaching, you commanded us to love our enemy.
Help us to be one.
 Before your supper, you washed the feet of those who would deny you.
Help us to be one.
 Before your sacrifice, you prayed for unity.
Help us to be one.
 On the cross, you brought together what had been lost.
Help us to be one.
 In your death, you touched those in darkness.
Help us to be one.
 After your resurrection, you returned to those who had abandoned you.
Help us to be one.
 In pouring out your Spirit, you made the Church the sacrament of unity.
Help us to be one.

By Fr. Aaron Wessman

3

Outline for the Day

Questions and Tensions with Discussion

What Would Jesus Do?
Practical Tools with Discussion

4

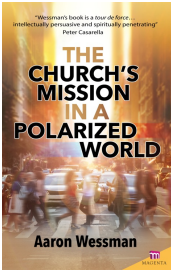
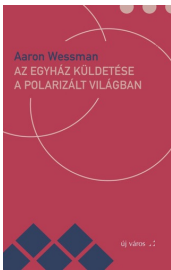
Some Preliminary Items

- Not a partisan approach – Understanding & Navigating
- Remain Hopeful – What is one thing you can do?
- Polarization is personal...for others...and for me



5

A small contribution to a huge challenge...

6

Some Questions and Tensions for the Church and Society in the United States...



7

Questions and Observations

- Why has our partisan/cultural situation become so ugly, vitriolic, hateful, and violent? "Rising Dehumanization"
- The Church is the sacrament of unity. St. Paul labored for unity. Jesus prayed for unity. But Catholics are struggling with unity in the USA today. "Sign of Peace"
- Catholics have the most diverse and universal tradition in all of Christendom. "You are only Catholic if..."
'Bookshelf' 'Vocation Fairs'

8

Questions and Observations

- Why do we allow the broader cultural and political conversation to set the tone and agenda for our ecclesial existence? "All Empathy is Toxic"
"Non-Engagement" "Unredeemable"
- It is easy to blame others for the challenge of polarization. But.... "They need to change!"

9

Questions and Observations

- Jesus said love your enemies and invited sinners to his table. He asked us do the same.
"I wish that they would die off."
- Jesus also said he would bring division. But that does not mean we should seek or promote division. "You don't understand, Father!"

10

Questions and Observations

- Not something that solely affects isolated individuals alone
- Not simply disagreement
- Not simply conflict
- Not simply about ideas
- Not fixed by uniformity nor superficiality
- Not fixed by singing "Let it Be" by the campfire
- Not the fault of any single political party, politician, or even a singular recent event
- Not fixed by ignoring the issue

What needs to be clarified about (toxic) polarization?

11

What is (Toxic) Polarization?

The creation of factions that (seemingly) share little in common and rarely interact (in person or online). This leads to potential misunderstanding and little trust.

Individuals in these groups are influenced by inter-group dynamics, which means they only listen to and care for their own, and avoid or wish harm on the other.

Outgroup hatred and dehumanization grow due to negative rhetoric and intense feelings. Can lead to increased violence.

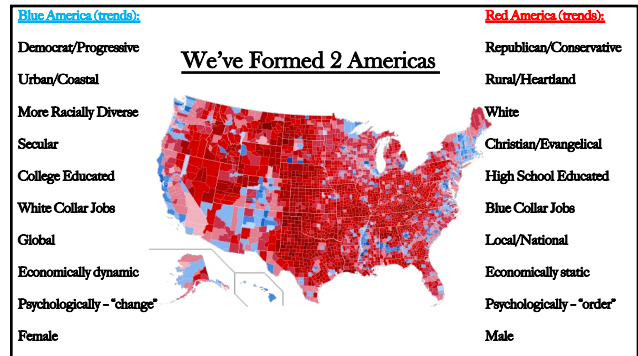
This touches most areas of life -- totalization

12

Questions and Observations

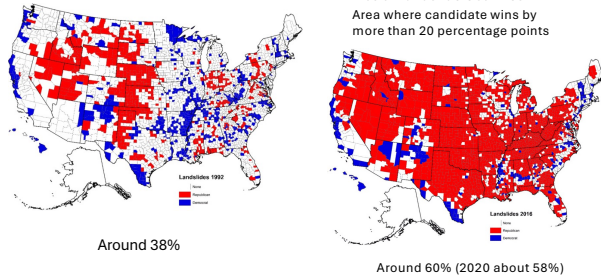
What does this look like? A few images...

13

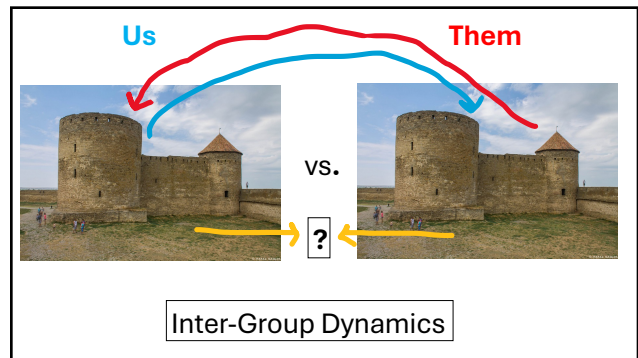


14

More Evidence of Separation/Unfamiliarity: Landslide Counties



15



16

**Hateful, Violent,
and Deliberately
Hurtful Rhetoric
Exacerbate the
Divisions**



17

Questions and Observations

- How does our tradition invite us to respond to the challenge of polarization? "We have answers, tools, resources!"

18

Discussion and Dialogue

- *Where do you see polarization in your own life and ministry?*
- *How is God challenging you to grow this day?*

