

It's nice to see you all again. I had a good trip, but a terrible time getting home. I spent last week in Mumbai, India, at a meeting of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. This group is responsible for a new English translation of the words we say at mass – the Gloria, the Creed, as well as all the prayers the priest reads out of the big red book the server holds. You say and hear the same words in every English-speaking Catholic Church on the earth. The new translation will affect all those churches, including ours. The commission is made up of 11 bishops, each representing a different English-speaking country. They meet twice a year with the members of their secretariat from Washington DC. My job is to take notes at these meetings so they can concentrate on the translation. Of course, I have a few ideas about how this translation should go myself. They will let me raise questions and offer comments, but when a decision is made, I take notes while they make votes. The finished product is still about two years away. But the work is coming along.

The flight from Mumbai to Newark takes 15 hours, and I was on board the plane at the gate last Saturday night in first class, next to the window, no one sitting next to me. Departure time was 11:40 p.m. The pilot backed the plane away from the gate, and then pulled it in again because one of the engines wasn't responding properly. He tried it again an hour later. Still no luck. They canceled our flight and had us leave the plane. We went back through immigration to get our passport stamps canceled, retrieve our luggage, and then go to a hotel. I had been up all night at the airport. I got to bed at 5:30 Sunday morning, and four hours later the alarm clock in my hotel room went off; the previous occupant had set it, and I never thought to look.

It's a long story, but it involves an additional flight to New Delhi, where I spilled a glass of red wine all over my pants before getting on board a 15-hour flight, now in coach, not first class, and an unaccompanied 10-year old child in the seat behind me threw up. Let's just say, I'm glad to be home.

My patron saint, Paul, didn't have it easy on his travels either. When he got home from Corinth, he learned that the community was rife with division. We hear about this in today's second reading. People were taking sides: "I belong to Paul. I belong to Apollos. I belong to Cephas." Paul is like, "I belong to Christ." He calls the Corinthians "brothers and sisters," and he scolds them; he begs "that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose." It reminds me of the two words my mother used to say decades ago when we kids asked her, "What would you like for Christmas?" "Good children," she said.

Paul never shied away from a good argument, so I'm sure he was not simply trying to make the conflict go away. Rather, he believed if you are of one mind and one purpose you will find Christ. The conflicts that tend to consume our thoughts can usually be tolerated if this much is true: if all of us, no matter what we think about other stuff, belong to Christ.