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CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

September 25, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

God has blessed our parish for more than 150 years with Jesuit priests who have dedicated their lives in faithful service to the Church through their ministry among us. As eloquent preachers, gifted liturgists, compassionate confessors, learned scholars, and critically acclaimed authors, these men gently guided us to places of courage and the conviction that who we are at our very core matters if we are to call ourselves Catholics. There is no surer sign of that than the ways in which we reach out to those on the peripheries of society and welcome into our parish those who seek refuge, understanding, solace, reconciliation, mercy, and acceptance. Together we witness to the world what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, heralds of hope, and people of moral integrity.

There is one Jesuit priest in our midst who has eloquently and compassionately ministered to us for close to two decades, and he proudly claims the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola as his home parish. I speak of Father Jim Martin who began his ministry here as a deacon, celebrated his first Mass as a priest at our altar, and has engaged in every form of priestly ministry among us since that time. The attendance at the Masses at which he presides and the lectures which he delivers in Wallace Hall indicate the respect, affection and admiration we have for Father Martin. We are more certain of our faith because of the wisdom and spiritual insights he imparts in the diverse forms of his ministry as a visiting Assisting Priest here at St. Ignatius, as noted author and distinguished editor at *America Media*, and as an esteemed lecturer and public speaker.

I now call upon all of us to stand in solidarity with Father Martin who has recently been subjected to a wave of harsh and unjustified criticism because of his attempts to bridge the chasm of misunderstanding and distrust through dialogue and reconciliation. The torrent of invective leveled against him because of his most recent book, *Building A Bridge*, has unveiled the depth of prejudice and intolerance against affirming our LGBTQ brothers and sisters as valued and beloved members of the Church.

It is with a real sense of sadness that I write this letter, but I am compelled to do so in the name of every principle of decency and Gospel value. Let us keep Father Martin in our prayers and let us pray that the hearts and minds of those who fail to abide by the message of Jesus Christ to love one another will be open to the guidance of God's Spirit and be led to a place of respectful dialogue and genuine reconciliation.

Sincerely in the Lord,

*Fr. Yesalonia*

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