

21st Sunday of Ordinary Time(b)

August 25-26, 2018

Joshua 24:1-2a,15-17, 18b

Ephesians 5:21-31

John 6:60-69

- Whom will we serve...whom shall we follow? I would hope that our immediate response would be that we intend to serve, we intend to follow Jesus Christ...Where and how we will serve and follow Jesus is a much more difficult question to answer-made even more so by the ongoing reports of sexual abuse by priests and the irresponsible and criminal cover up by bishops and other church leaders.
- Many of us, with justifiable anger, ask ourselves how we can continue to support this church, how can I trust my priest or the leadership of this church. Many will ask ourselves how can I follow Jesus in what seems to be a morally corrupt institution? I have asked myself on more than one occasion whether I should stay, or should I go. Not only because of the sins or crimes of others but because of my own sins. I ask myself is my behavior drawing others to Jesus or am I just standing in the way?
- It is harder and harder for us to live our Catholic faith in public. It is harder and harder to stand by the Catholic Church...and I fear that it may get much more difficult before it gets better. I am afraid that the report from the Pennsylvania grand jury is just the beginning of the revelation of an evil history in our church.
- This evil sadly exists at every level within the church. This evil is not the result of Jesus abandoning his church, it is not the result of the Holy Spirit disappearing. Instead it is the result of sick, selfish, brutal, and malformed men who used, what used to be automatic trust to take advantage of the small, the weak, the poor and the helpless...the very people Jesus commanded us to care for. The evil that exists in our church is also the result of inept, ignorant, and ill-informed leadership, whose desire to preserve the image of the church allowed and even enabled the abuse of so many innocent children.
- Sadly, there is no way we can undo the past. There is no way we can undo the damage that was done to these children, their families, and our community. Sadly, this evil, and these crimes will be part of the church's history forever. We must do all we can to offer healing to the victims of these crimes. We must, every one of us, be vigilant in reporting any abuse by anyone. We must pray that the leadership of the church will, with the wisdom of the laity, be made accountable for their actions, those of the past and going forward.

- I wish that this was one of those instances in which quoting Jesus I could make everything better. I wish that by repeating Jesus' invitation to be not afraid I could make it easy for us to move on. But as much as I trust Jesus, as much as I know that He who was able to defeat the evil of the cross and the tomb will never let evil prevail in His church, I nevertheless find it hard, to simply say as for me I will serve the Lord in the Catholic Church...
- But where else would we go....? Where else can we find the perfection of Jesus Christ when he is obscured even by our own brokenness and sinfulness
- As for me in my imperfection, my brokenness, my sinfulness, I am sticking with Jesus. I am staying with the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession. I am staying with the scriptures and the Tradition and the frailty of the Catholic Church. I do not do this out of blind loyalty, nor do I do this thinking I can fix what is wrong with the church. I am staying because day after day, week after week, year after year, this is where I see Jesus. This is where I come to know that despite the sins and crimes of clergy the victory of good on the cross will never be turned into a defeat.
- Being a catholic these days is not easy. Choosing to continue to practice our faith in this church becomes more difficult with each announcement. But the darkness of these sins, these crimes will never dispel the light of Christ. The very same light of Christ which promises to reveal every secret also promises to save us and set us free.
- So, I stay, and I invite you to do the same. Recalling that Jesus calls us the light of the world I challenge each one of us to do our part to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safe in our parish and in our church. And yes, I encourage us all to pray for the victims of these crimes that our church, so rich in mercy, will also seek justice for those she allowed to be wounded on her watch.
- Jesus you have the words of everlasting life, may these words offer wisdom to those who lead our church so that it will quickly become a place where evil fears to tread.