

Homily 19 August 2018 20th Ordinary Sunday

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In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us directly: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" And therefore, we become the body of Christ—as a parish, as a community of believers, as a people of love and justice. We are the body of Christ.

In St. Paul's letter to the Christians living in Ephesus, we just heard him warn the people: "Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise persons; do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand the will of God, and be filled with the Holy Spirit".

In the last four days I have received a number of personal phone calls and emails. Yesterday, I had a call from the Executive Director, the head of Catholic Charities; then a call from a professor at Odisee University near Brussels, the place where I delivered an invited guest lecture on *Laudato Si'* last May; and another call from a religious sister down in L.A. They all asked me the same exact question: "How are you doing?"

Their phone calls and kind words of concern were motivated by the horrific report from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury, as featured on the front page of *The New York Times* last Wednesday and this morning, as well as other news sources worldwide.

And it is horrific, indicating the staggering numbers of abuse of minors that took place over the past 70 years.

In such a devastatingly challenging time, people have been generous to me in expressing their gratitude for my own priestly service and commitment to the Lord and fidelity to my priestly vocation.

Speaking for myself and for my priest good friends here and abroad, we are truly sad. We are angry. We are frustrated. We experience another wave of shame as we acknowledge that far greater pain has been inflicted on children and families and on all the faithful people of our Church.

That Grand Jury Report in Pennsylvania follows too the recent scandals in Chile, Australia, and elsewhere including the new investigation into the Boston seminary.

At every level, our Church is in pain.

In the face of these tragic realities, we embrace anew our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. We ask for the healing of those who have been hurt. We ask for clear judgment, restitutive justice, and appropriate penance for those who have committed evil or who have failed miserably in any way to protect children and families from evil.

We are shaken again as were the apostles on Good Friday, but we remain committed to our mission and our determination to be a pastoral voice of hope within our pilgrim Church and world, weak and sinful as we are.

We trust in God's love. We base our hope in Jesus and in the Spirit who gives us the inspiration and strength to say and do what we must.

As we move forward, we demand that those responsible for these scandals within the Church that we love, must, individually and collectively, publicly apologize with remorse and ask forgiveness for the evil they have perpetuated, and for what they have failed to do, especially bishops who ignored the evil.

It is my prayer and the prayer of my priest friends that God will give all of us who serve as pastors, priests, bishops, deacons, and lay women and men, the strength to root out the pride and ambition of clericalism and its scandalous behavior.

We move into the future affirming the need for proper independence, sufficient authority, and substantial leadership by the laity.

We pray for all of God's people and we stand ready to assist in any way we can, as our Church addresses the moral and spiritual catastrophe of abuse.

We encourage each of you not to lose hope, and to trust that God will see us through these difficult days; that God will assist us in continuing to create and foster a safe environment that ensures the safety and protection for all peoples, especially our children and those most vulnerable.

We especially ask you to join us in prayer for all the victims of abuse and their families that they may experience the healing of God's love and mercy. May they all find comfort and strength in God's loving presence, as the Church pledges to continue to restore trust through accompaniment, communion, accountability, and justice.

In short, there is nothing wrong with the Church that cannot be cured by what is right with the Church.

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