

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time • B

Christ the King • September 1-2, 2019

One night a wife found her **husband** standing over their infant's crib. As she watched him looking down at their very first baby, she saw on his face a mixture of emotions: disbelief, doubt, delight, amazement, enchantment, skepticism. Touched by this unusual display and deep emotions, with eyes glistening she slipped her arm around her husband.

"A penny for your thoughts," she said.

"It's amazing" he replied. "I just can't see how anybody can make a crib like that for only \$46.50."

It is easy to lose sight of the **forest because of the trees**. It is easy to give attention to minutiae and turn our backs on the essentials. In today's Gospel, that is why Jesus calls out the scribes and Pharisees: they had lost the forest for the trees.

I can't help but read and reflect on today's readings in light of what is happening in our church today — truly the forest was lost for the trees.

The homily is supposed to bring God's word and present to today. So, it's likely you've heard about the major scandals in the Catholic Church today. Maybe you're deep into the news articles, or maybe you've just heard bits and pieces. Regardless of your exposure to all of these things, the fact of the matter is that our Church in a moment of great **crisis**. A crisis is a turning point, a moment of decision which will determine a future course of direction. A crisis is not only a time of danger, but it is a time of opportunity. This is an incredible a time of darkness in our church; but it is also a time of hope for unprecedented renewal in the church.

The horrific actions, the coverups, and inaction of Church leaders are on display in a big way — as they need to be. The harm done to the most

vulnerable is sickening, infuriating and wrong. It must be so named and it must be fixed! As I mentioned in my letter in the bulletin last week, I am appalled and angry, disappointed and sickened. I am deeply grieved by the harm done to the innocent and pray for forgiveness.

You are appalled and angry too. You may be so upset that you are considering walking away from the Church. I get this, I do. And I pray that you don't. Don't leave. **We, the Church, need you.**

Yes, the Church is quite sick and there is a great deal of healing that must take place within it, but to do this we need you.

I don't know how that healing will take place, or what it will look like ultimately. But what I do know, is that this healing will require a **boldness and faithfulness** on the part of you, the **lay faithful**. Be bold in the face of this trial and continue to seek to worship Jesus in the church through every question, doubt, anger, feeling of disgust, that you are facing right now. It won't be easy, and it will require a true re-commitment to the truth, goodness, and beauty of our Catholic faith, but with Christ it is possible. Here are some real ways we can begin to put that into action right now:

- 1. Try to be patient.** Take all allegations, those known and those that may come — even those made against Pope Francis — seriously, but pray, hope, and expect that the proper investigation of them will bring forth the truth. The things that Archbishop Viganò details in his letter incriminate Pope Francis and others, but until they're corroborated by evidence, they're still allegations, not confirmed truth. We don't have answers right now and it's unlikely we'll get answers very quickly. So let's be patient and trust in God.
- 2. Pray and fast for healing.** The Church exists to be close to Christ, not an institutional superpower. It's clear that sin has wounded the Church, badly. To be part of the healing that must take place, we must do the

hard work of the faithful, relying on Christ and the power of His resurrection to drive out the darkness that has made its way into His Church. Let's seek Him now more than ever, in daily prayer and in small sacrifices. Join us in prayer and fasting on the Fridays of September, as a beginning. Remembering, that our prayer must first of all be for those abused and so harmed by those who should have been trusted and then we pray for the church.

3. **Don't lose the forest for the trees.** We are the church and it is Christ that we follow. All of this darkness has caused great pain, confusion and anger but we cannot forget that we are the Church, together, united, one Body.
4. **Remain close to Jesus.** We cannot allow anyone, however important or eminent their position, to get in the way of our faith in Christ. We cannot base our faith on any human being. To base your faith on anyone other than Christ will only bring disappointment. Christ alone is our salvation, Christ alone is our foundation.

This task will be difficult, I don't deny it. But let us pledge our prayers and support for the victims of child abuse and their families. Let us renew our commitment to maintain the highest possible standards of safety for all, especially children. I humbly ask you, despite everything that has been revealed and anything yet to come, that we continue to **stand together** in that shared mission to bring Christ's light and love to the world. Together, we are church.

The greatest saints are the ones who continue to have faith in Christ, even when the entire world around them says that faith is foolish. We have hope and we have a sure reason to believe that good will come from this darkness, because we believe in the power of Christ's victory over death. With confidence in that, we must rise up, Church. It is up to us!