

22nd Sunday OT – (Year B) – September 2, 2018

DT 4:1-2, 6-8; PS 15:2-3, 3-4, 4-5; JAS 1:17-18, 21B-22, 27; MK 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

St. Ignatius of Loyola is the Catholic Church's **undisputed heavyweight champion** in the arena of **discernment of spirits**. He trained himself—or rather, **God** trained *him*—to **distinguish clearly** between the workings of the **Holy Spirit** and the workings of the **Evil One** on an individual soul. Ignatius summarized his insights in his **14 Rules of Discernment of Spirits** and, in the process, gave the Church one of its most useful tools for **advancement on the path to holiness**.

All **14 rules** have something valuable to teach us, but it is **Rule 13**—in particular—that speaks so **pointedly** to the **sorry situation** we find ourselves in as a Church today—facing a **scandal of sexual perversion in the clergy** and a **crisis of trust** in the kinds of high-ranking **churchmen** who ran a **culture of cover-up** of abusers decades ago...and those who are **obscuring the truth** today.

The **Church** is not a merely human **organization**. It is an *organism*—the living, **Body of Christ** (cf. Eph 1:22-23). And the Church need **not** behave like **political parties** or **corporations** which go to great lengths to **deny any wrongdoing in their ranks...even when it's obvious they're guilty**. It is precisely in *admitting* our **sin** and, above all, our **need for the Mercy of Jesus Christ** that **“he increases and we decrease”** (cf. Jn 3:30) and thus *allow the Church to be what she is*.

But some high-level churchmen today continue the **“corporate cover-up”** mentality to **save face**, instead of taking the kind of **“call it what it is and repent”** approach that would have **saved the victims from needless suffering**. And some extremely high-level churchmen are *still* at it—not **hiding more abuse**—we pray to God—but **certainly hiding the truth...and refusing to face the problem** in the current crisis.

This **culture of secrecy shields**—among other things—**a homosexual subculture** which reaches the **highest levels of the Church** and stretches to **every corner of the globe**.

This secretive culture also keeps **hidden the true intentions** of very high-ranking **prelates in the Church today** who, *judging by their own words and actions*, seek to **change the Church** and her **teachings** in *radical* ways.

Something needs to be clarified here. I just used the word *prelate*, but it's a good bet that **some**, if not *many* of you, may know its meaning. **Prelate** is a broad term that refers to **high-ranking clergy in the Church**—and includes **bishops, archbishops, cardinals** and the **pope**. So, it's a time saver to refer—a homily shortener!—to all of these churchmen at these levels...as *prelates*.

Another clarification is necessary here. While there have been too many priests who sexually abused **many males** as well as *some females*—after all *one abuser is one too many*—the vast **majority** of priests are **not** abusers. In fact, most of us really **do** strive to be **good** priests...and a smaller percentage really wants to be *holy*.

The same is true for **higher-ranking churchmen**. When we say, for example that “**the bishops**” covered for a disgraced **former** cardinal, or covered for predator priests, we obviously don't mean **all** bishops. As a matter of justice, we must **not** tarnish the reputation of **faithful bishops** who are just as **devastated** and **shamed** by this crisis as we are, and who are truly committed to ushering a new era of **accountability** and **purity** into the Church.

At the same time, when we speak of **complicit** bishops, we *are* certainly referring to **those prelates**—who **were**—and some who still *are*—unwilling to **face the real problem** at the heart of this crisis...and **do something** about it.

Sixteen years ago, when the **US Bishops** established a **zero-tolerance policy** to deal with abuser priests, many of the **good priests** said:

“Oh, that's just great! *We priests* are on the hook. But where is the accountability for the *bishops*?”

Now that the **putrid predatory behavior** of a **former American Cardinal** has been exposed to the light of **truth**—the light of *Christ*—it is no longer just **faithful** priests and laity who recognize the **problem among the prelate class**.

This foulness is visible for the **whole world** to see, and only an **imbecile** or an *ideologue* would even **think** of dismissing the **crux**...and **magnitude**...of the problem now.

But make no mistake! **This is *not* a repeat of 2002. This is *new territory*!**

Much good has been done to protect the vulnerable from sexual predators in the clergy since 2002. But very little, if anything, was done to **purge the prelate ranks** of bad apples—and *everyone* now sees with **crystal clarity!**

What was exposed in the McCarrick case was **pure evil**.

The **fact that** it was exposed is a **great gift**, an act of **mercy**, from **God himself**, to rouse us out of our **spiritual stupor** and to call the Church to **genuine conversion**.

Now...let's consider **why** St. Ignatius' **Rule 13** is so important for us at this time. In this rule, Ignatius exposes one of the Devil's favorite ploys to **enslave a soul in secrecy and sin**. Here's part of the text of the 13th Rule:

“...when the enemy of human nature brings his wiles and persuasions to the just soul, he...desires that they be received and kept in secret; but when one reveals them to one's good confessor or to another spiritual person, who knows [the Devil's] deceits and malicious designs, it weighs on [the Devil] very much, because he perceives that he will not be able to succeed with the malicious undertaking he has begun, since his manifest deceits have been revealed.”

The way this typically plays out in an *individual soul* is that, after a person commits a serious **sin**, the Devil then **assaults** the person with **lies**...like these:

“You can't tell *anyone* about this. What will they *think* of you? Everyone will know you what a *horrible person* you are. You certainly can't tell *Father*—even in *Confession*—because he'll remember what you did and think about it every time he sees you. *You have to keep this quiet!*”

If we're honest with ourselves, we can probably **all** recall some sin from our past that we were **ashamed** or **afraid** to confess. But once we humbled ourselves and confessed it in the **Sacrament of Penance**, we felt immense **relief** and **peace**, as if the **weight of the world** were *lifted* from our shoulders.

Psalm 32 sums up this dynamic of **sin** and **mercy** beautifully:

Happy the man whose offense is forgiven, whose sin is remitted. O happy the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, in whose spirit is no guile. I kept it secret and

my frame was wasted. I groaned all day long, for night and day your hand was heavy upon me. Indeed my strength was dried up as by the summer's heat. But now I have acknowledged my sins; my guilt I did not hide. I said: "I will confess my offense to the Lord." And you, Lord, have forgiven the guilt of my sin.
(Ps 32:1-5)

Now, St. Ignatius didn't **invent** this discipline of exposing our weaknesses and failings to the Light of Christ. This idea goes all the way back to the **Evangelists**—the *writers of the four Gospels*. They didn't hide the **defects, foibles, faults** and **sins** of the **Apostles** when they wrote the Gospels. How many times do we see **St. Peter**—for example—acting **overconfidently**, aggressively **rebuking** the Lord, and then **denying** Jesus—as *predicted*—so that he was reduced to a weeping mess?

And Jesus *still* made this **imperfect** and **fragile** man the **first Pope!**

The **Evangelists** did not **whitewash the weaknesses** of the Apostles in order to **make the Church look better** to outsiders. Rather, by **presenting** the Apostles **honestly**, with *all* their **shortcomings**, they merely demonstrated—without a shadow of a doubt—that the Church's ability to weather any **storm**, and to survive any **assault**—whether an **inside job** or an **outside attack**—is a confirmation of **Christ's promise** that the *"gates of hell will not prevail"* (cf. Mt 16:18) against his Church—not even when the Church is manipulated by bad **prelates** and **priests**.

The **Church's indestructibility** over the past 2 millennia *proves Christ's promise*...over...and over...again.

This lesson has clearly been **forgotten** or **disregarded** by a *small but influential faction of prelates* who insist on diverting attention away from the **real roots** of this crisis **today** with *self-serving smokescreens*.

Decades ago, while the **serial sex abuse** was being perpetrated by priests, the rationale of some **high-level churchmen** for **burying the filth**...and **pressuring victims** into *silence*...was **"to spare the Church from scandal"**. If there's one undeniable lesson to be learned from **that** foul practice, it's that **if you try to sweep evil under the rug in order to maintain appearances, it will eventually surface in a much more scandalous way...to the greater humiliation of the Church.**

Sixteen years ago—**either** because the bishops were afraid of being called “**homophobes**” by correctly identifying the **central issue** in the abuse—*male on male predatory behavior*—**or**, in the most egregious cases, because some of **these same bishops** were—**themselves**— either **acting** in an evil manner or **covering for** those who were—the bishops denied that the majority of the abuse was **male on male predatory behavior**, and instead blamed *pedophilia*—the abuse of children who have not reached puberty.

But the facts are irrefutable: 81 % of victims were male—most, if not all, beyond puberty. If the bishops keep denying the obvious, they make it look to a pagan world as if **reason** is actually *incompatible* with **faith**.

The **numbers** don’t lie, even if the **spin doctors** *do*!

There are prelates in the Church *today* who **sow confusion** and **doubt** and then **refuse to clarify** their stance on issues of **sexual chastity** and **sin**, even when asked—**directly** and *publicly*—to do so.

There are other prelates who, when confronted with the urgency of the current crisis—and **the Holy Father’s exclusive authority and ultimate responsibility to discipline and even remove corrupt bishops**—say that the Holy Father has **higher priorities** than eradicating this evil—such as “**talking about the environment and protecting migrants**”. God help us!

With all *due* respect to the American Cardinal who spoke **these absurd words**—the Pope is the **Vicar of Christ**, not the **Commissar of Climate**. The fact that a prince of the Church refuses to take seriously the *righteous anger of the laity simmering just below the surface* and dares to suggest that **progressivist political agendas** are **higher priorities** for the *Spiritual Head of the Catholic Church*, than eradicating a **spiritual cancer** that has **consumed innocent bodies and souls in the House of God**, shows just how **unfit** and **unserious** certain prelates are about bringing about the needed reform.

Jesus speaks in **today’s Gospel** to the **Pharisees**—*quoting the Prophet Isaiah*—in words that could just as easily be directed to the **clueless cardinals, bad bishops** and **perverted priests**:

“Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: *This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts.*” (Mk 7:6-7)

Thankfully, this **deeply ingrained tone-deafness** in the *highest ranks* of the Church has now been exposed **for the whole world to see**. They literally can't hide their *ideology* anymore, and **clergy and laity** are demanding answers—**clear** answers.

Here, however, **we—clergy and laity alike**—have to be **utterly realistic** about the *true costs* of the needed reform that so many of us are calling for.

The root cause of both *spiritual...*and **sexual** abuse is: ***Dissent from—and disobedience to—the dogmas and doctrines of the Catholic Church.***

The scandal **began**—and is being *perpetuated*—by **dissent from...and disobedience to Christ**. Sexual perversion in the clergy—be it homosexual **or** heterosexual—is the **rotten fruit**. The *cause* is *infidelity* to Christ and to the Church he founded.

My **brothers and sisters**, here's the **bottom line**:

We need to stop the pandemic **sexual** abuse, **by killing its roots before it can grow**. To stop **sex abuse** means eradicating the **spiritual abuse** that so often **precedes** it...and develops *into* it.

And so, each person—ordained or lay—**must ask himself or herself**:

If the good bishop in your diocese—who is really **serious about reform**—has to remove the pastor from *your* parish because that priest is deliberately **abusing the liturgy**; or because *he's* either **sexually active** with males **or** females; or because he's a **homosexual activist**; or because he tells you that **women should be ordained**; or that there are **any genders other than male and female**; or that the Church needs to permit **birth control**; or any of those other *poison teachings* that corrupt the young and the unsuspecting, you must answer this question:

Would you stand by your bishop if removing such a *spiritual abuser* meant that your parish would have to *shut its doors* for lack of another available priest to replace your *disgraceful pastor*?

Because *that* is the **magnitude** of this **contagion** in the Church!

Many **spiritually abusive** priests are quite aware that their bishops are caught between a **rock and a hard place**—that there are real consequences for a good bishop if he **takes such a traitor to Christ out of circulation** in order to **protect the souls and consciences** of the faithful.

The **spiritually abusive priests** could conceivably say to the average bishop:

“I know that you know that if you remove me, you’re going to face a backlash from the people I have malformed in the faith, so I dare you to! Go ahead and make your move...and face the full brunt of such a decision.”

Such a priest simply does not care for the good of the souls entrusted to him!

He’s willing to use **them**—to use *you*—as **human shields** in this *spiritual war* to protect himself from **the consequences of his infidelity to Christ...to the Church ...and to his flock**, because so few—if any—of these **False Fathers** have ever encountered a bishop with *that kind of resolve*—the kind necessary to **really** clean house.

Do you, then—my brothers and sisters—**demand** of your bishop something that you will then turn around and **condemn** him for if **his** actions cause a hardship for *you*?

Our **good bishops** need assurance from the laity that **you** won’t abandon *them* if they make the excruciating decisions necessary to **Cleanse the Temple**.

On the other hand, for those members of the laity who **willingly support and encourage dissenting priests** and **enable** their *spiritual abuse*, while *at the same time* condemning the cover-up of sex abuse, I offer *you* some food for thought.

If you enable the evil spirits of dissent and disobedience to hide in your **heart**, then—**spiritually** speaking—you are just as complicit as bishops who enabled the **agents of evil**—the *pervert priests*—to hide in parishes and to continue to consume the bodies and souls of the vulnerable.

If you condemn the **abusers** and **enablers**—after doing essentially the same things, *spiritually*—then you condemn *yourself*, as **St. Paul** wrote to the **Romans**:

...you have no excuse...whoever you are, when you judge another; for in passing judgment upon him you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things. Do you suppose...that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? (Rom 2:1-3)

In **1976** at a **Eucharistic Congress** in **Philadelphia**, Cardinal **Karol Wyotyla**—the future **St. John Paul II**—issued a warning:

“We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through. I do not think that wide circles of American society or wide circles of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel versus the anti-Gospel. We must be prepared to undergo great trials in the not-too-distant future; trials that will require us to [make] a total gift of self to Christ and for Christ. Through your prayers and mine, it is possible to alleviate this tribulation, but it is no longer possible to avert it.”

In light of the recent **Grand Jury bombshell**, it’s rather **eerie** that the **future Saint** spoke those words in **Pennsylvania**, isn’t it?

In our **own** day, in our own **Church**, we are faced with this very question:

Which will you choose—the Gospel or the anti-Gospel?

The Church established by Christ, or the Church corrupted by *faithless prelates* pretending to be *friends* of Christ...and *fathers* to the faithful?

Your choice will show how serious you **are**—or are **not**—about first purging evil from **your own heart**...and then helping to purge it from **our Church**.

Because the **future of the Church**, and the **good of the whole world**—not to mention the *eternal destiny of your soul*—all these depend on which side you **do** choose.