



Thoughts on the Journey...

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The other day, a friend approached me about the most recent sex-abuse scandal in the church.

Her question hit me like a ton of bricks and put me on the defensive, “How can you work for an institution that fosters and covers up this kind of behavior?” Her question was valid and sounded precisely like the question I asked myself when I first heard the news; and let’s face it, this isn’t the first time we’ve heard news of this kind as it relates to the Catholic Church. Why the defensiveness on my part? I didn’t abuse anyone or contribute to the problem by covering it up. I get up every morning, head out the door, and do what I believe God is calling me to do, because I believe I am contributing to building the Kingdom of God. Regardless, the question called me to a deeper introspection and prompted more questions. How can a church that Jesus himself established have so much corruption and deviance?

Throughout history the church has suffered through numerous scandals because flawed human beings, with a propensity to sin, turn from God because of their sinfulness; I include myself in that statement. With sin, comes darkness and deceit. And, at the heart of the darkness and the lies, is Satan himself. The Prince of Darkness’ greatest challenge in this world is to distract us from the love of God. He uses the good, the bad, and the ugly to distort truth and to sever our trust in the Lord who promises to be with us always.

The only way to dispel the darkness is through the light of holiness. We can spend a lot of time hashing and re-hashing the *who*, *what*, and *why* of this evil, but it just contributes to the distraction and keeps us floundering in darkness. We all play some part in the darkness by our own sinfulness regardless of the severity of our sin. If we spend more time looking inward in truth, pray for our own conversion, and acknowledge that sin in all forms makes sin more attractive, there begins our quest to eradicate evil.

As the Bread of Life Discourse continues in John’s Gospel, there were some of the disciples who didn’t believe in Jesus’ message that he was *the bread of life come down from heaven*. As a result, they left Jesus and returned to their former way of life.

Jesus then asked those remaining, “Did I not choose you twelve?” Followed by, “Yet, is not one of you a devil?” (referring to Judas who would betray him).

“Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Jesus never promised perfection in the church. Even one of his twelve apostles that he chose he exposes as the devil. But the good news - he did promise us an advocate! The Holy Spirit is alive and well and working in the Church. Sooner or later the Spirit reveals the truth; the Spirit brings light to the darkness; the Spirit exposes sin; and through faithfulness and trust, the Spirit renews his people. We suffer through our own sin and we suffer together through the sins of others. It is what Jesus intended when he established HIS CHURCH. Like Peter, I ask myself, *to whom shall I go?* Today, I confirm my belief and say to myself, “I’m not leaving the Church that Christ established because of the sins of others. He has shown me repeatedly that he has the words of eternal life. Instead, I will trust in his promises and not be distracted by the devil who roams among us. I am going to rise each morning, head out into the world, and do my best to do the will of God.

In **Pope Francis’ Letter to the People of God** dated August 20, 2018, he offers us this:

*“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it”, said Saint Paul. By an attitude of prayer and penance, we will become attuned as individuals and as a community to this exhortation, so that we may grow in the gift of compassion, in justice, prevention and reparation. Mary chose to stand at the foot of her Son’s cross. She did so unhesitatingly, standing firmly by Jesus’ side. In this way, she reveals the way she lived her entire life. When we experience the desolation caused by these ecclesial wounds, we will do well, with Mary, “to insist more upon prayer”, seeking to grow all the more in love and fidelity to the Church (SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises*, 319). She, the first of the disciples, teaches all of us as disciples how we are to halt before the sufferings of the innocent, without excuses or cowardice. To look to Mary is to discover the model of a true follower of Christ.*