

Brothers and Sisters,

Today we have some powerful readings. In particular the Gospel and the second reading have eschatological implications, that is they deal with the end times. But we would be remiss to say that these readings don't speak to us today as well.

In the Gospel we hear Jesus talk about the time that is coming, the time when He will be glorified, and God will be glorified through Him. When we place this Gospel passage in its larger context, we see that this text is taken from the last supper. It's at the last supper where Jesus spoke these words to his disciples. Well, what happened next? Jesus was led off to be crucified, and his disciples abandoned him. Jesus was indeed glorified, but his glorification happened in the middle of a scandal.

Scandal is nothing new to the Church. It has been there from the very beginning and, as we are all aware, it is still present in the Church today. The reality we face as a Church is that, while the Church is safeguarded from error in faith and morals, individual members of the Church are still prone to sin. While Peter held the keys to the kingdom, and in his official position was free from teaching and preaching false doctrine, he was still a sinner, one who created scandal by denying Christ.

Today we Catholics face a scandal in our own time. This scandal demands a response. While the media has been calling for a variety of responses from the Church hierarchy, some of which are reasonable, others of which are not, one thing I have noted is that there seems to be a lack of reflection as to what our response as individual Christians should be. Pointing the finger at others or telling others how they should act or handle a situation is something we're all good at. What's harder is for us to reflect upon what we should do, on how we should act, particularly in light of this scandal. I've seen almost no reports or news stories talking about what how this scandal calls us as individual Christians to change our behavior. Most of the stories talk about how other people should change. In fact, many of you may be saying, "What do you mean I need to change? I didn't create this mess?"

That may, in fact, be true. But remember that we are all members of the Body of Christ. As members of His body we recognize that the body is ailing, there is a disease in the body. And while **we** may not be the cause of the disease, we do need to be part of the cure. One teaching that has remained constant throughout history is that the Church always needs of people who will guide it, will do what is right, especially when other members of the Church are not doing so.

Don't hear me wrong, I am not advocating for changing church teachings, what I am advocating is that in this time of scandal, we need to double our efforts to live out our Christian calling, and to assist others in doing likewise. I am not saying we ignore the problems in our Church, but I am saying that we combat these problems by doing what Jesus commanded us to do – to love others as he loved us. This is the only way we as a Church will truly overcome this illness that has invaded the body of Christ.

What do I mean by that? Well, certainly we can develop and implement new policies and procedures. For example, we can require all clergy and lay ministers to

go through various training programs. And these changes are indeed good and appropriate responses to the crisis. But ultimately, they're not a cure. The cure comes when we follow Christ's mandate in today's Gospel, when we love as Christ loved. This means we need to stop being self-interested, self-absorbed and instead become self-giving. We need to put aside our own agendas, and our own interests and seek to serve others. Until we do that, there will always be some sort of scandal in the Church, because self-interest will always create scandal in a body that is meant for self-giving.

Let me give you a pop culture example. Friday, I saw the musical *Wicked*, which, by the way, was terrific. This theme is very much on display in this musical. In this musical we learn how all the wickedness, how all the evil of the events seen in the movie *The Wizard of Oz* are a direct result of people acting out of their own self-interest rather than giving of themselves to others.

Perhaps this is why Jesus commands us to do is to the opposite. He commands us to love, and to continue to love, even when doing so is difficult. He knows that acting on self-interest can only lead to trouble; it can only cause scandal. So He commands us to love as he loved – that is, to give of ourselves to others. To not act out of self-interest, but out of total obedience to God.

This is the type of love that can renew the Church. In the 2nd reading, St. John the Divine tells us of the recreation that will come at the end of time - when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. He speaks of the time when there will be no more pain or suffering, the time when scandals will cease to exist, because everyone will be dwelling in God's presence. At this time, St. John tells us, the old order will have passed away. But what is even more striking than the passing away of the old, sin-corrupted order is how this passing away will take place. The last line of the second reading says that the one sitting on the Throne, that is, Jesus, says, "Behold I make all things new."

It is Jesus who makes all things new. And the whole of the book of Revelation, and indeed the whole of scripture is clear that He does this not by asserting Himself, but giving fully of Himself.

Friends, if we want to truly renew the Church, we have to recognize that the only way we can do this is by following Christ's example of self-giving love. That is what scripture tells us. None of the media's suggestions will cure our church. No policy or charter will be the cause of renewal. The true source of renewal is Christ Himself, and the only way we can truly participate in his work of renewing all things is to follow His example, to obey His commandment to love as he loved, to stop thinking about what we want, and start asking how we can help others.

Peace to you and to all who follow the Risen Lord.