

Talk given at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, July 2021 in the wake of the news of the news of the residential schools.

Welcome.

Acknowledge that everyone is perhaps looking for something different?

What will be discussed:

Not the history, purpose, or fallout from the RSS.

What we will discuss: what our response should be as Catholics when we hear of such news. How to go forward in hope, and where to find healing.

I hope that this talk will be general enough that you can apply it to any crisis in the Church. For example – 3 years ago, Cardinal McCarrick scandal, 10 years ago sex abuse scandal (ongoing?), ect. This will not be the last major scandal in the church, and perhaps in our lifetime.

Begin with the Gospel (Matt 16-24:43 – 16th Sunday Ordinary Time, Year A)
Parable of the weeds and wheat.

What can we take from this parable?

- Good and Evil will coexist in the world until the end of time.
- Evil isn't from God, it is the Enemy.
- God permitting good and evil to grow together – it is a mystery. Somehow, according to the parable, the good need the presence of the evil in the world for *their* survival!
- At the end of time, the all causes of sin and all evil doers will be gathered *out of the kingdom*. (they are a part of the kingdom until then!)
- At the end of time, justice will prevail. At our point in time, salvation history is still unfolding – we're not “there” yet. We do not see the whole picture yet.

There have always been sinners in the Church

Those who committed the evil were living inconsistently with our faith.

Just because we are Catholic, does not mean that we support them, or that we follow them, or that we hold them up as any kind of standard.

If our faith teaches that we should do as they did, then yes, we should be ashamed.

But we have no reason to be ashamed of our faith simply because some people failed to live up to what our faith demands.

After the teaching on the Eucharist, Jesus lost many followers. He then turned to ask his disciples, “Will you also leave?” Peter replied “Lord, to whom shall we go?”

You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” Can we also make this our prayer, especially during difficult moments that test our faith?

Never a time without sinners in the church. Peter, Judas. Many sinful popes, bishops, priests, and many sinful members. This is the reality of what the Church is – it is the divine institution formed by Jesus, made up of sinful members.

Coming to terms with the uncovering or exposure of the truth of what the Church is.

Hiding the lie vs living the truth. What has happened has happened – we cannot change the past. Coming to terms with living in a broken world.

God permitting good and evil to grow together – it is a mystery. Somehow, according to the parable, the good need the presence of the evil in the world for *their* survival! Maybe, *maybe*, what we need to understand in all this, is a deeper understanding of what the Church is.

Our reaction to events reveals more about ourselves than it does about the events or persons. Eg seeing someone in line at a movie you thought they wouldn't watch. You just didn't know them well enough to know what they liked or didn't like. Nothing's changed in them, but we're taken by surprise.

Can we say the same thing about the Church? It is what it is, and through this crisis, or any crisis in the church, we are coming to a deeper understanding of the reality of what the Church is:

- it is both sinners and saints.
- In the church, there is both joy and sadness, love and hate,
- It is people, building up the Kingdom of God, and building up their own kingdom.
- It is people striving for holiness, and it is people who don't.
- It is people of great sanctity who appear very normal, and great sinners who put on the outward image of holiness.

Can we recognize that the Church is comprised of a full spectrum of people, and that in one way or another, we are all imperfect and sinners.

Dis-integration caused by sin. Someone can appear to be "holy" and be sinful. E.g. Jean Vanier. This is the reality of living in a broken world.

We should be very slow to judge or to jump to conclusions or jump on bandwagons, just because it would be practically impossible to have all the information to make a good judgment.

But no matter what happens, or what doesn't happen in the Church, it is still the Lord's Church. There is no other. We have to come to terms with this. We have to have faith in the Lord that he is present in his Church.

How to not feel complicit in these acts by coming to church?

We are judged based on what we do, not what someone else has done.

Deuteronomy 24:16 "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

Ezekiel 18:19-20 "Yet you say, `Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?' When the son has done what is lawful and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

That being said....

Why are the Anglicans and United Churches off the hook so easy? They've apologized once, and for them, the case is closed. Is there a subconscious belief in the Mystical body of Christ? When one member suffers, all suffer. Why do we feel shame in these sins? Can we still be proud to be Catholic? Why be Catholic at all?

Can we differentiate between the proper shame we should feel because others failed to live up to what the faith demands of them, rather than projecting the shame on ourselves who didn't do these things?

Can we differentiate between the true sadness and grief that we experience when we hear of the public and scandalous sins of others, without feeling sad or distressed about being a Catholic?

Can we hold both of these as true at the same time:

- The Church is Holy, yet is comprised of sinners.
- That the Church belongs to the Lord, yet he has left it in the hands of people.

- That each person is judged individually, yet we are redeemed as a community (the church).
- That we can feel a real sadness about the sins of others in the Church, yet be at peace in the Church because we know that this is where the Lord is.

OUR RESPONSE:

What is our response:

- prayer.
 - How to find hope and healing in Jesus? We know that only Jesus heals. Jesus works through his Church, so the best way to encounter Jesus is to stay close to his church.
 - Pray for an increase of faith –
 - belief in what is unseen, in what we hope for. That one day, justice will prevail (Matt 10:26 “So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.”) We don’t have the all the answers now, nor do we need them. We are called to live in faith each day.
 - Have faith that our Lord is present in his Church despite the sins of her members, that the Church is where the fullness of our Lord is found.
 - **Life your faith well** – you can build up the body of Christ and bring healing to her members by how you live your life. Do your best to live out the Catholic faith well, make use of the sacraments, strive to grow in virtue, live your vocation well. Do everything in your power to be a good disciple of Jesus.
- Become educated – know the facts – seek the truth!
 - Where to get the facts? Note the anti-catholic bias of media.
 - Read the TRC reports. Most of the news that is coming out has been well documented for many years, if not decades. Note the recommendations: how many are for the Church, and how many are for the government. Try and keep things in perspective about where restitution should come from.
 - See the list of resources below about the Residential schools. *You don’t have to agree with these*, but can we appreciate a different perspective? If I am critical of this information, will it prompt me to keep seeking the truth?

- Diocese of Hamilton, including History, Expressions of Apology, Actions and commitments, and Overview (Pastoral Letter from Bishop Crosby). <https://hamiltondiocese.com/residential-schools/>
- Reports from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>
- Dr. Moira McQueen Interview on the Church's Moral Response <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZ-s0Y5dE8Q>
- A report by Dr. Scott Hamilton, Anthropologist, at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. Dr. Hamilton was retained by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to review the indigenous school cemeteries <https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AAA-Hamilton-cemetery-FInal.pdf>
- Six things the media got wrong about the graves found near Residential Schools <https://tnc.news/2021/07/12/six-things-the-media-got-wrong-about-the-graves-found-near-residential-schools/>
- Brian Holdsworth: Indian Residential Schools <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laXT6DekrmU>
- Brian Holdsworth: Catholic Churches are Burning Down <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zv9PWTrs9g>
- Listen.
 - How to help or make amends to the indigenous peoples?
 - Re: taking up collections or volunteering to help them. No, we need to listen to what they need, not what we want to do.
 - From Laura Houle-Tapson, a Catholic and Canadian Indigenous person:
 - **First**, stop saying, 'but there were some good things', 'there were good people in those schools'- just stop. Everything about Residential schools was wrong. Period. Full stop.
 - **Two**; demand justice and transparency. Call for the release of ALL RECORDS, for the cooperation and financial assistance in searching residential school sites. Call for apologies.
 - **Three**; open your heart and mind to the possibility that you are biased and strive to educate yourself. Educate yourself by seeking out the information, to build relationships with Indigenous people, attend events, ask questions, and listen, really listen. Stop speaking over Indigenous voices and start creating space for Indigenous people to tell their truth.

Close with a prayer