

WE HAVE JUST HEARD THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST

- And it truly is Good News
- But after the events of this past week
 - I don't really feel very good about the current news in OUR Church
 - That some of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church has been deceitful and dishonest in their response to the abuse crisis
 - That some priests of the Catholic Church have been preying upon children and youth entrusted to their care
 - And that the members of the Catholic Church have been abused, hurt, neglected, not believed, not supported and ignored by those in charge
- There is no good news here
 - There is only news of corruption and scandal
 - That needs to be brought into the light
 - And needs to be dealt with more than by words of prayer and apology – although both are sincerely needed as well

QUITE HONESTLY

- I am left speechless by what has been happening over the past days and months
 - The report from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury is disgusting and criminal
 - At times this past week
 - I have been left in a stupor, numbed by the news
 - Or been dazed and depressed by what has happened
 - And angered by the lack of meaningful response from the bishops
 - Although in the last day or so some are starting to speak more boldly
 - About the need for change
- There are so many mixed emotions
 - And I am sure all of you who have seen and read the news
 - Are feeling the same way – How could this happen again?
- I am sorry for the thousands of the victims whose lives have been destroyed
 - By the actions of the clergy – priests and bishops
 - I weep over the loss of faith that people have experienced
 - Because of what has either happened to them
 - Or of those who have read what has happened to them
- I have felt like crying many times this past week
 - And over the past months
 - Because I feel helpless and sometimes even hopeless
 - About how OUR Church will ever recover
 - And how those who have been hurt will ever be healed
- It just leaves me speechless
 - But it also reminds me of how much we need our Savior, Jesus Christ

I LOVE THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

- I Believe she is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic
 - I believe she is the Bride of Christ and our Holy Mother
 - I believe she was founded by Jesus Christ on the rock of Peter's faith

- And I believe Jesus is the way, the truth and the life
- I believe all these things
 - But I am starting to question or lack trust in the way OUR Church is structured
 - How it is organized and run
 - Especially when it comes to man-made structures and rules
 - That make the Church more like a corporation
 - Than like the mystical Body of Christ
- I believe this time must be the last time
 - The response to this latest crisis needs to be different
 - OUR Church is in need of reform
 - Not something that would divide her into many parts
 - But a reformation that would
 - Reform her structures and her practices
 - Reform the way the voices of her members are heard
 - And also included in her decision-making
 - When it comes to policies and procedures

I HAVE BEEN THINKING A LOT THIS WEEK ABOUT THINGS THAT COULD BE DONE

- That could give birth to a change in the culture of OUR Church
 - And that are in no way contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ
- Unfortunately, it seems the hierarchy has lost the trust of the faithful
 - They seem to be out of touch with the mood of the people
 - And don't seem to understand why that is
 - I believe we need to break down these walls of silence and privilege
 - And start having serious conversations on changing the way
 - OUR Catholic Church operates in the world
 - Not what she teaches and professes
 - But how she is organized and run

THESE ARE JUST MY THOUGHTS IN RESPONSE TO THE EVENTS OF THESE PAST WEEKS

- And some of these may be your thoughts as well
 - I believe now your thoughts need to be heard
- My first thought is this:
 - The voices of all of you, the lay faithful, must be heard
 - Most especially women, because you really have had no voice
 - Over the centuries, it seems all power and authority has been consolidated within the Office of the Bishops
 - And, yes, I believe we owe the office of bishop our respect
 - But maybe it is time to have more voices at the table
 - Other than a gathering of celibate bishops
 - We need more voices and voices that will be heard
 - Maybe we even should think about changing the way bishops are appointed
 - So that the secretive nature is opened for all to see
 - And maybe even give the priests and the lay faithful

- An opportunity to express our opinions on who should be our bishops in the first place
- The second thing that is on my mind is this:
 - Maybe it's time to reexamine the requirement of a celibate priesthood
 - Celibacy requirement for priesthood can about in the 12th century
 - And guess what
 - It was put in place to address a decline in priestly morality
 - How ironic is that? Indeed, how ironic?
 - Now I know a married clergy will come with its own challenges
 - But I feel we must at least be able to discuss it
 - And hear the views of all of God's people
 - Concerning a discipline that is not a dogma of faith
 - And please remember that celibacy does not equal sinlessness
 - I am a sinner just like everyone else
 - But I am a sinner redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ
 - And I am striving every day to live a life of holiness
 - Just like all of us should be doing
- My third thought is that
 - Any Cardinal, Bishop or priest implicated in covering up or ignoring clergy sexual abuse needs to resign. Period.
 - I personally think it is hard to judge the past with eyes of today
 - But we're beyond that argument now
 - Everyone implicated must resign for the good of the Church
 - Because the Church needs to be cleansed and purified
 - She needs a fresh start
 - Again, priests and bishops are sinners just like everyone else
 - And we need to show mercy, compassion and forgiveness to all
 - But I believe the events of the past days and months show us that
 - Trust has been destroyed
 - And now the healing process cannot fully begin
 - Until anyone stained with the sins of the past
 - Either steps down or is removed from office
 - It may seem harsh but the sacrifice of some for the good of all
 - Has its roots in Jesus Christ
- And my last thought from this past week is this:
 - We do need to pray, all of us
 - We need to pray to God for the conversion of hearts and minds
 - So that reforms can and will take place in our Church
 - The early statements of the Bishops have been unfortunately lacking
 - Although some bishops are starting to speak more boldly
 - So, we must pray for our bishops
 - And that our bishops come to the realization
 - That they are now part of the problem

- Therefore, they cannot and must not be the only ones working on the solutions
- All of us ought to be involved because all of us have been affected
 - We all want and need to be part of the solution

FINALLY

- I am sorry that we are going through this painful process again
- But I would ask you not to give up your faith in OUR Roman Catholic Church
 - For I truly believe she is OUR holy mother
 - She feeds us by Word and Sacraments
 - Especially the living bread of Christ in the Eucharist
 - As we heard in the Gospel today
- Her failures are not her fault
 - They are the fault of those who act as her leaders and pastors on earth
 - But her ultimate leader is Jesus Christ
 - So please remain in her and be a part of her
 - Help to reform her and restore her
 - To the perfection she is intended to have by Jesus Christ
- And pray to Mary, Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, and Mother of the Church
 - That Our Holy Catholic Church will rise up from the ashes of this scandal
 - To once again be the faithful Bride of Jesus Christ.
 - And the sacramental sign of hope for the world
 - Of the Good News of Jesus Christ