

FACING THE CHURCH SCANDALS

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(Trigger Alert!)

Dear Friends,

“When Jesus disembarked and saw the vast crowd, His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.” This was the concluding line taken from the Gospel on the 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time. It speaks volumes to us today as we suffer the hideous crimes of these wicked wolves in shepherd’s clothing. Many of them seem to have abandoned Christ and His flock only after first preying upon our Lord’s sheep.

JESUS, I LOVE YOU!! WILL NOT WALK AWAY!

For the last four weeks, the readings at Mass have been preparing us for this Sunday’s message: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life” (John 6:69). These are words that must echo throughout our minds and hearts as we try to make sense of the current tragedy in the Church. While Jesus continues to entrust His Bride to sinful men, it is nevertheless Christ, who must always remain in our hearts as the **only** Good Shepherd. In all this useless murmuring about “those bishops” or “those cardinals,” Jesus looks directly at each of us asking, “Do you also want to leave?” These words could not be more appropriate for the horrendous mess that these blind guides have once again created by their sinful silence and their secret, perverted lives! However, walking away from Christ when we are shocked is what happens when we have failed to form our faith properly and are unprepared for storms such as these.

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In light of the current crisis, I have been reflecting upon the out-of-control fires here in California that have been so destructive on so many levels. Tens of thousands of trees incinerated, thousands of acres destroyed, homes lost, lives taken, families relocated; it seems impossible that we will ever recover from such devastation! Everyone wants answers! When and how did the fire start? Who started the fire? Were the fires started by accident or were they deliberate acts? When will it all be over? These are some of the questions that come to my mind when I am praying for all the people who have been directly affected by these fires. I also pray for those who have been *indirectly* affected by the fires and, especially, those brave firefighters who are working day after day to put out the fires.

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Similarly, the current scandal in the Church can easily be seen as an out-of-control fire! It forces us to imagine a landscape that has been cleared and will soon be ready for new growth. The Catholic Church needs new leadership! We need holy priests not business men! We need to clean out the filth from the seminaries! Dangerous priests need to be imprisoned and delinquent bishops need to be fired! These self-serving Cardinals need to be put into a cage and sent back to Rome! **The Pope needs to speak up!** That’s the future I am hopeful to see when this raging fire ends its necessary burn.

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While you may or may not appreciate this analogy of the current scandals in the Church, it is one that I find helpful, especially as we look to the future of the Catholic Church in the United States. Although our Lord Himself uses the imagery of fire to describe Hell (and maybe some of these men will inevitably end up there if they do not repent!), fire is also the image associated with the Holy Spirit. Even though it may seem that the Church is on fire and we are witnessing devastation, lives lost, families destroyed, we cannot lose hope that this fire is actually purifying the Church from an evil infection. This Divine Fire of God is cleansing the Temple of God by both exposing and removing the infections of greed, indifference, promiscuous homosexuals, and criminal cover-ups.

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I will not ask you to pray for these blind guides, but rather I am begging you to pray for the faithful shepherds who are following Christ even when the majority leave Him, like in today's Gospel. Notice that Jesus does not go after those who walk away. No! Jesus stays with those who love Him and obediently serve Him. Please pray for the priests who stand with Jesus in these painful and humiliating times. Please pray for the priests who are trying to put out the destructive fires of gossip and calumny, the incinerating Fires of Hell that attempt to destroy our faith in the Good Shepherd. Please pray for the faithful Bishops who are like the firefighters trying to save souls for Christ, instead of those wicked bishops who devour the sheep like greedy wolves. Please pray for the priests who have given up everything--family, friends, property, and careers--to follow Christ the Good Shepherd! Pray for us and please do not walk away from us who stand with Christ!

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Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen once asked the question, "Who is going to save the Church? Not bishops, not the priests or the religious. It is up to the people. You have the minds, the eyes, and the ears to save the Church. Your mission is to see that your priests act like priests, your bishops act like bishops, and your religious act like religious." In other words, we have to hold each other accountable for our actions so that we can ensure the mission of the Church: To save souls! Right now, the souls of some of our bishops and priests and, yes, even cardinals, are in desperate need of being saved! Let us who have faith in Jesus, the **only** Good Shepherd, remain with Him, who we know loves us! "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life."

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