

XXII SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

In excruciating agony and inconsolable sorrow the Psalm says, "*Out of the depths I cry out to you, o Lord!*" These days have not been easy for any Catholic in the United States. Once again, the painful realization of an old and still present wound in the Body of Christ has brought us shame, confusion, and uncertainty. In the face of adversity, our faith is challenged, our determination to defend the gospel is diminished, and our trust is crushed under the weight of that agony that echoes the words of the Psalm one more time, "*Out of the depths, I cry to you, o Lord!*"

If there's any hope in this scenario, only the word of God can give it to us. The first reading invites us to observe God's statutes and decrees if we want to possess the land. St. James reminds us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Finally, the Lord Jesus teaches us in the gospel that true purification comes from within and brings forth works of justice, truth, and restoration. In other words, God invites us to follow the path of truthfulness and the rule of justice as a way to find redemption.

After hearing the testimony of the Grand Jury in Pennsylvania, the claims about the lack of accountability in the hierarchy, and the accusations against visible leaders in the Church, I was left in distress, and with me, many of you who love and work tirelessly to promote and defend the truth of Jesus Christ entrusted to the Catholic Church.

I was left wondering, to whom shall we go? And like Peter, I felt confident to say, "Lord, you have words of life eternal." If there's a place to go during these times, that is the cross of Christ that lifts up the lowly and scatters the proud in their conceit; that strengthens the weak and brings the wicked to shame, that grants mercy to the one who shows mercy and justice to the one who cries out of the depths.

This past week, as I was walking the Way of St. James in northern Spain, I meditated on the Cross of the Christ. The image of Jesus with arms outstretched, an open side, and the offertory of his beaten body was the best illustration to describe the pain many of the victims of abuse have suffered in the hands of those who were meant to bring them salvation. The vulnerability of Jesus on the cross is the vulnerability of those who have had the courage to speak up and unveil the details of something that was never supposed to happen, but once done, cannot stay in the dark.

The courage of the victims in showing their wounds preaches to all of us in the Church. It speaks to us about truthfulness, about justice, and about redemption. It invites us to leave behind the hypocrisy, to stop cleaning the outside of jugs, cups, kettles, and hands; to stop purifying what doesn't defile us and start entering into ourselves to clean the place from which evil thoughts, impurity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, and folly come.

As a member of the clergy, I apologize for the betrayal and for the pain that many of us have caused in you. I encourage you to contribute to the Church's holiness by renewing and strengthening your own commitment to the Lord's cause in prayer, sacrifice, and sanctification. As a Church, we can unite to demand justice for the victims of these crimes and to work as brothers and sisters for the purification of the Church. In the same way Christ gave himself for us, let's give ourselves for him by cleaning from within what evil has defiled in our hearts.