

August 26, 2018

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

"It is better that scandals arise than the truth be suppressed."

Pope St. Gregory the Great (beg. of 7th C.)

Last Sunday, I offered a confession for forgiveness for the long sex abuse crisis by the Catholic Church hierarchy. We are experiencing a practice of faith - all of us. We have to believe that we - all of us - are being driven into a desert where the Spirit is forming us for the future.

Jesus had a similar experience with his followers, his little parish, his twelve apostles. Sometimes he rejoiced with them, at other times he was frustrated with them, "*Don't you get it!*" But they stayed together through it all; they stayed in union with Jesus and became a beautiful group, a little Church. They like us tried, and what could be more pleasing to God.

The church has always been a flawed, sinful, human institution filled with darkness and light. We are all called to grapple with its contradictions, to find healing in the Eucharist and strength standing next to our fellow weary travelers.

This is a time of crucifixion for the church - for all of us, and crucifixions exact real blood. Listen to a lament, the words of a hurting heart. They come from Little Brother Carol Carretto who lived from 1910 to 1988. He headed up Catholic Action for twenty years in the face of a growing movement of Fascism in Italy. He yearned to see renewal in the church. In 1954, he joined the Little Brothers of Jesus, living in the Sahara Desert in Algeria. His words may well be ours:

"Oh, my church, my church, how I must criticize you. But it is criticism that comes from love. You make me suffer more than anyone can imagine, and yet I owe you more than I owe anyone else. I should like to see you destroyed, and yet I need you desperately. You continually cause so much scandal, and yet you alone can show me the path of life, the way to holiness. Never in this world have I seen anything more compromised. Yet never have I touched anything more pure, more generous, or more beautiful. Countless times I have felt like slamming the door of my soul in your face and leaving you for good. Yet every night I have prayed that I might die in your arms.

No, I cannot be free of you. I see that your defects are mine, and those of all. Should I turn my back on you, where would I go? To another church? or even build a new one? But then it would be my church, not Christ's."

It is better that scandals arise than the truth be suppressed.

Many writers and leaders are saying the same thing: it is better that scandals arise than the truth be suppressed. We criticize the Church, not because we hate her, but because we love her.

Let us all reflect, and share if you should wish: *"What is it that I can bring to the church that will lead her to a holier and more pure path?"*

I know there is a lot of pain associated with all this, but I would like to offer this guidance: *"that any sharing not be about blaming and complaining about what's wrong with the church, but be about what could be our part in helping her regain her purity and holiness?"*

"What is it that I can bring to the church that will lead her to a holier and more pure path?"