

23B '18

**I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life**

What "State of Mind" does this create in us?

I want to ask you this afternoon (morning) to join me in looking once again at the abuse crisis with which the Church is being faced. I know we have considered this twice already, and that this is not an easy thing to do, but I do not believe this is reason enough not to look at it again. What I want to reflect with you now is that this crisis is not just about the clergy, it is about all of us.

There is an almost overwhelming number of articles being written about this issue from who are the abusers, to who has been doing the coverup, even to a power-struggle that is going on in the Vatican and hierarchy right now about what is causing this sin and what to do about it.

I saw one article written back in 2016 by Michael Sean Winters in the National Catholic Reporter which is still relevant today. Its title is, "*The Roots of the Clergy Sex Abuse Crisis.*" This is an excerpt from that article:

"The fact that we as a church are still wrestling with how to control the crime of clergy sexual abuse of minor's invites all manner of emotional responses. Some people have left the church. Others have become fatalistic about reform, suspicious that the leaders of the church are more concerned with institutional self-preservation than with protecting children. Still others think the crisis only confirms their suspicions that the hierarchical organization of the church is only about power."

We know that for two hundred years, the Vatican has generally resisted the rise of national democracies with its use of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility to maintain its centralization of power in Rome. We know of the inability of the leaders of the church to discuss sexual matters frankly, especially during the long pontificate of Pope John Paul II, which lead people more or less to no longer believe in what the Church taught.

At the same time, we also know that many leaders in the church have confronted the abuse crisis and have done so with concern for the victims and their protection in the future.

All of this has been about how our Church has functioned in this crisis, but there is another place we have not yet looked at, that is, ourselves. This is pointed out in the words of a psychologist who recently came to my attention who said:

"It can often happen that someone can hear something unpleasant, and then go away untroubled as if she/he had never heard it. There are many reasons for this, one especially being the person's 'State of Mind' at the time. No one is disturbed or troubled if he scorns and disregards what is said, or hates the one who said it. A major reason for this is that no one wants to find fault with one's self. If she has left the path of self examination, she will never have peace, will feel afflicted by others and will be an affliction to others, and all virtuous efforts will be wasted."

Who is this insightful psychologist? St. Dorotheus, a sixth century monk who founded a monastery in Egypt. These words are still ringing true today: our reluctance to look at our own "State of Mind" in the face of Church abuse. This is asking each of us:

† What is my "State of Mind" towards the abusers?

† What is my "State of Mind" towards the hierarchy of the church for its failure to correct this sinful situation in the Church?

† What is my "State of Mind" when considering what needs to be changed in the church?

If my "State of Mind" assumes a moral superiority over others and treats them with condemnation, hatred and indifference for their sin, I am not contributing to the healing of the Church and am in fact participating in her sin. If however my "State of Mind" does not assume a moral superiority over others but instead treats them with mercy, compassion and forgiveness in their sin, I am contributing to the healing of the Church and am in fact participating in her redemption.

We have been chosen to face this crisis in our Church at this time. We are called to develop a Christ-like "State of Mind" when doing so. A Christ-like "State of Mind" does not condemn the sinner. We learn this from the Cross. A Christ-like "State of Mind" does not turn away from the unpleasant, but is willing to face what needs to be faced. This is the experience of Church - each helping each other uncover all our sin, and then forgiving each other for them, all of which helps us to understand what Christ is getting at when he says:

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whoever follows me will have the light of life**