

Remember last week's Gospel? Jesus had just revealed to his disciples the mystery of the Holy Eucharist; that his flesh is true food and his blood is true drink.

Now in this week's Gospel, we see their reaction: many of his disciples walked away; they deserted him. This is the only time in the Gospels that we see such a large number of disciples abandoning our Lord.

Notice that Jesus allows it; he allows them to make a choice. He even explains to them – before they leave – why they might not be able to accept his teaching. He tells them, "It is the Spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail." He's helping those people understand that, yes, this teaching may be difficult if everything you love and hold dear is part of this world. If you and I refuse the gift of faith that God offers to us, and don't allow the Spirit to give life to our faith, then we are only left with the things of this world. We are living in the flesh and our flesh is of no avail; we will not be able to understand what God has planned for us; we will not be able to discern God's will for our lives.

Jesus does not want to lose any of his disciples, but he also respects their free will to choose whether or not they will take that leap of faith and follow him.

Unlike those disciples who walked away, we see that Peter does take that leap of faith.

When Jesus turns to the Twelve disciples and asks them, "Do you also want to leave?" notice that even though Simon Peter does not really understand how Jesus' flesh and blood will be food and drink, he does have faith in Jesus; he knows Jesus is the real deal and so he responds in faith and says: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

A few thousand years ago, as we heard in our first reading, God asked the people, through Joshua, if they would follow him or desert him. Joshua told the people they could follow the gods of the world around them, but then he told them straight up, as a man of faith, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Each of us has to make our own choice whether or not we will follow our Lord. But if you decide that you will follow Jesus Christ and become a son or daughter of his Bride, the Church, then you, the laity, deserve shepherds – clergy – who will also serve the Lord rather than this world; who understand that it is the Spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail.

I recommend everyone here read the Pennsylvania grand jury report that recently came out on August 14th (or at least a solid summary of it) and the 2004 John Jay report. But don't stop there, read some of the good, solid analysis of the data in those reports that provides a proper perspective.

The data from both reports demonstrate that the clergy scandal within the Church, a scandal that has victimized youngsters, teenagers, and adults, where the perpetrators

and those who protected the perpetrators were our very own clergy – bishops, priests, deacons, and seminarians – that this scandal is not predominantly about pedophilia but about the acceptance of lifestyles that engage in what the Catechism refers to as acts that are intrinsically disordered. The world around us celebrates these acts, but these acts are objectively sinful.

As a member of law enforcement, it sickens me when I see one of my fellow peace officers abusing their powers of authority for nefarious, immoral purposes. When that happens, there are some serious earthly consequences.

As a member of Christ's clergy, it sickens and disgusts me when I see my fellow clergymen, especially bishops and cardinals, abusing their divine authority as they accept and validate and protect some of our clergy as they act out on their disordered lifestyles, or any of our clergy who fail to remain chaste. When that happens, there are some serious eternal consequences.

We need Men of God in our clergy, not wimps of this world.

Men of God recognize it is the Spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. Men of God recognize in St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, our 2nd reading today, of the unique roles of husbands and wives, in their mutual, but different, submission to each other, and the proper roles within the entire Christian family; Men of God recognize Christian marriage as an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church.

Wimps of this world no longer recognize that it is the Spirit that gives life and have thus become comfortable living in the flesh. Is it no wonder they have lost sight of the unique differences between male and female? Is it no wonder they have lost sight of the true nature of marriage and the family? Is it no wonder that their worldly view of human relationships has affected their understanding of the relationship between Christ and his Bride, the Church?

If we, as members of the clergy, do not seek the sacramental graces available to us to remain strong Men of God, and thus allow ourselves to become worldly wimps, then how can we expect to remain faithful to the mission we were ordained for?

As a husband and father, I understand the anger and disgust and frustration and betrayal and sadness many of you feel as we discover more sordid details about what has been going on within our Church.

I recently found out about a family in another parish who were about to pull their children out of religious education and even leave the Church because they were so disgusted by the failure to act, or the silence of so many of our clergy on this matter. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit worked through someone in that parish who helped this family understand that we cannot leave Jesus because of a Judas, or a group of them.

I think it is natural to have these feelings, especially considering there is nothing so personal to us as our relationship with Jesus Christ and his Bride, the Church.

But turning our backs on Christ and leaving the Church is not what people of faith do – walking away is what those who are in the flesh do, as we heard in today's Gospel.

You and I will weather this storm just as the sons and daughters of Holy Mother Church have weathered storms throughout the past 2000 years: we will follow the lead of our first pope, St. Peter, and remain faithful.

We may not know how long it will take, but we will, with God's help, remain faithful to Christ, and his Bride, the Church. We will not abandon Christ.

I'd like to share with you what I thought was some very good counsel, full of wisdom, by a professor of theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit. This is what professor Ralph Martin said recently about this scandal of the clergy:

"The floodgates have opened...It won't be a quick fix. Our faith will be tested...

...Jesus wants the Church to be holy, 'without spot or wrinkle,' and then he will present her to his Father...

...The Lord sends prophets, and if we don't pay attention to them, he sends lawyers and newspapers...

...But as the faithful continue to demand justice and accountability, and pray for and aid the victims,

we also need to get up every day and do God's will for our lives.

We still need to love the people in our lives,

and we still have this treasure in earthen vessels...

...The Catholic Church is still the place where the treasure is, where the truth is. Jesus is there, and he will lead us through this."

Deacon Dan Rindge

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Stats from the Pennsylvania grand jury report:

Summary of Pennsylvania Predator Priest Activity

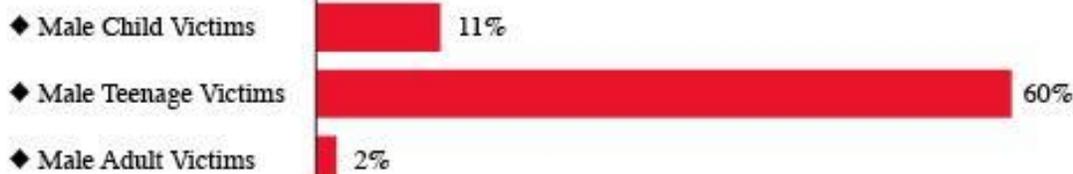
Total Heterosexual Predation	58	23%
● Pedophile	15	6%
● Pederast	41	16%
● Adult	2	1%
Total Homosexual Predation	189	74%
● Pedophile	29	11%
● Pederast	155	60%
● Adult	5	2%
Child Porn (gender non-specific)	9	4%
Male Foot Fetish	1	.3%
TOTAL	257	100%

SUMMARY OF PENNSYLVANIA PREDATOR PRIEST ACTIVITY

HETEROSEXUAL PREDATION



HOMOSEXUAL PREDATION



CHILD PORN



Source: 40th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury REPORT 1
Interim -- Redacted