

“God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being.”

These powerful words from the Book of Wisdom in our first reading are extremely important in our understanding of evil in all of its forms, as well as our understanding of God. For example, is it right to “blame God” for the reality of evil in our world? Well given what we just heard in the first reading today, the answer is *absolutely not*.

Ultimately brothers and sisters, God is neither directly or indirectly responsible for the reality of evil. And while God certainly does not approve of all the evil in the world, which greatly offends Him, He permits it so that He can mysteriously draw forth an *even greater good from it*. So while God lovingly created the universe and the human race, God did not “create” evil in any way. So *who is* responsible for the evil in our world? Ultimately, the tragic answer is: *we are*—the human race—and our responsibility lies in the fact that we can abuse the gift of our free will, reject love and goodness, and freely choose evil.

Now the Church would clarify and add that there are three main sources of temptation, and therefore three main sources of evil: the devil,

the fallen world, and the flesh—also known as our own fallen human nature that is wounded, corrupted, and inclined towards evil because of the effects of Original Sin—*the Original Sin* of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, which led to the Fall of the human race.

In fact, in our first reading today, Sacred Scripture helps to answer the question: “where did evil come from?” in that the inspired author writes, “For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. *But by the envy of the devil*, death entered the world...” So pain, suffering, and death, which were *never* a part of God’s plan for us, entered the world *precisely because* sin entered the world. And sin entered the world when the first human beings, Adam and Eve, consenting to the temptation of the devil, abused their freedom and freely chose to selfishly disobey God. So sin, pain, suffering, and death (in other words, evil) entered our existence because of a total and selfish abuse of freedom.

So brothers and sisters if we ask, “why is there evil in the world?”, then the answer is: because we human beings selfishly abuse our freedom in order to choose evil. Then the next logical question is: why

is there freedom? To which the Church would respond that in order for love to exist, *freedom must exist*. You see God *cannot and does not* force us to love Him—*He loves us too much* to force us. Rather, He gave us the wonderful gift of free will so that we could freely choose Him and respond to His infinite love and goodness.

Of all the things we don't fully understand in this life, we *do understand* the nature of true love. We all understand that in order for love to be what it is, it requires freedom. There's no such thing as a forced or coerced love. So the reality is that *in this earthly life, with human freedom*, comes the possibility of abusing of that freedom and therefore the possibility of sin and evil.

Consequently brothers and sisters, in the context of sin, evil, and scandal *within the Church*, should we blame God and reject our Catholic faith? *Absolutely not!* Rather, when it comes to horrible crimes and scandals within the Church, the proper response is to hold those guilty individuals responsible for what they've done! We should never blame God for the horrific sins and crimes of others! Nor should we allow the sins and crimes of others to determine *our Catholic faith!*

That being said, let me be crystal clear: the sexual abuse of children by clergy or anyone else is a ***barbaric evil and heinous crime*** that should be punished to the fullest extent of the law! ***Such disgusting evil and filth has absolutely no place in Christ's Church!*** And let me repeat what I said to you in a homily almost two years ago on September 18, 2016: ***Nobody, nobody should be more angry and outraged*** about such crimes and scandals within the Church ***than us Catholics!***

***As a priest, nothing makes me more livid*** than such disgusting scandals and crimes in the Church, especially those involving priests and bishops, who are called to represent Christ in a unique manner. ***Anyone*** who is guilty of committing evil crimes against children or is guilty of knowingly and deliberately covering up such horrific crimes should be ***punished to the fullest extent of the law!*** As Catholics we must continue to work together to help ensure the safety of all our children so that such monstrous evils never happen again in Christ's Church!

Brothers and sisters, in the midst of sin and scandal inside the Church, we must truly take to heart the words of our Lord Jesus in today's Gospel: ***"Do not be afraid; just have faith."*** And our entire

faith must be rooted *in our Lord Jesus Christ* and in the mission and identity of His Catholic Church, *period*. *I can't emphasize this and repeat this enough: Do not root your entire Catholic faith in any one pope, bishop, priest, deacon or lay person!* Please do not root your entire Catholic faith in me, Fr. Tom, Fr. Guency, or anyone else! This isn't "Fr. Steve Isaac ministries." When we gather for Sunday mass, we don't begin the Nicene Creed by saying "I believe in one priest, the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth."

Yes, we priests are called to act in the Person of Christ and to truly "be Christ" for you *precisely so that you can root your entire faith in Him, not us!* The priesthood is not about us priests! Rather, the priesthood is about leading others to Christ! We priests are called to be bridges who humbly lead you to Christ so that you can root your entire faith in Him and in the mission and identity of His Catholic Church.

Brothers and sisters, when it comes to our Catholic faith, *the Truth is the Truth regardless of what anyone else says or does*. *So do not be afraid*, because no sin, crime, or scandal either in the past, present, or future could ever destroy or falsify the eternal, unchanging truths of our

Catholic faith! No sin, crime, or scandal could ever destroy the Truth that God exists, that He sent His only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ into the world to save us from sin and death and that our Savior established His One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to continue His mission until the end of time.

Brothers and sisters, as we heard in the Liturgy of the Word today our Lord Jesus Christ *is the definitive cure for sin and death*, and so our entire faith must be firmly rooted *in Him*. Our victorious Savior is the antidote to all of the evil in the world! Christ *has already won the war for us* and overcome all of the sin in the world and in the Church. And I have no doubt that in 2018 Christ is purifying His Church as we speak!

So as we prepare to worship and receive the divine Cure for sin and death in the Most Holy Eucharist, let us ask our Lord Jesus for the grace to persevere in faith, hope, and love through all suffering, knowing that He has already conquered all evil.