

Well if you don't already know this, one of the things you'll learn about me is that I love movies. And one of my favorite movies is *A Few Good Men*, starring Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson, and Demi Moore. And towards the end of this well-done military courtroom drama is a powerful scene between Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson where Cruise's character intensely questions Nicholson's character on the stand. What follows is one of the most famous exchanges in movie history where Cruise passionately exclaims, "I want the truth!" and Nicholson responds, "You can't handle the truth!"

This famous scene dramatically depicts the necessity and primacy of truth in human life. As human beings we strive to live by the truth daily and we seek the truth with every fiber of our being. Indeed as human beings, we were *created* for the Truth—in other words, we were created for God, Who *is* Truth *itself*. In today's Gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who *is Truth incarnate*, calls us as His disciples to be trustworthy and honest servants of the Truth.

You know "truth" in and of itself is a complex reality in that there are many truths which can be considered "mutable," meaning that they

can change depending on whether or not the objective reality of a thing changes. For example, right now, the truth is that in the regular season, the Eagles are 1-0 with a win against the Cleveland Browns. But that truth could change tomorrow night if the Eagles lose to the Chicago bears. Some truths are more stable and enduring than others. For instance, it is certainly true that the universe exists and so there's nothing anyone can say or do to falsify that statement.

There are many other truths which, by their very nature, are *immutable*, meaning that they *cannot* change *regardless* of what anyone says or does. For example, $2 + 2$ equals 4, and it will *always* equal 4, regardless of what anyone else says or does. So especially when it comes to unchanging truths, it's safe to say that the *truth is the truth regardless* of what anyone says or does.

Similarly, there are divinely revealed truths that are eternal or unchanging and there's *nothing* anyone can say or do to destroy or falsify these truths. In the second reading today we hear from one of the greatest servants of Truth, St. Paul, who in his First Letter to Timothy, proclaims the eternal Truth that there is one God Who exists and that He

passionately desires *all* people to be saved and *to come to the knowledge of the Truth*. The Apostle to the Gentiles also proclaims the *unchanging Truth* that our Lord Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man and that He was sent to save all humanity from sin and death.

Today, our Lord Jesus Christ is calling each of us to be humble servants of the Truth—to be *firmly rooted* in the eternal and unchanging Truths of our Catholic faith. Our loving and victorious Savior is calling us today to firmly and ultimately root our faith *in Him* and *in the mission and identity* of His Catholic Church. Nothing breaks my heart more than to hear people say, “I left the Catholic Church because of the priest sex abuse scandals or because I had a bad experience with a priest or a nun.”

Brothers and sisters, let me begin by saying that *nobody, nobody* should be *more angry* and *more outraged* about such recent scandals and crimes in the Church than priests and Catholics! *We* should be the *most outraged* about such evil and horrible scandals within the Church! As a priest, nothing makes me more *livid* than such disgusting scandals

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 heinous crimes should be punished to the fullest extent of the law! And as Catholics we must constantly work together to help ensure that such horrific evil *never happens again* in Christ's Church!

That being said, let me also say this: we should *never* allow the evil behavior and sinfulness *of others* to determine *our faith*! The most reasonable and proper response to an evil scandal and crime inside and outside the Church is to condemn it, embrace the victims, and make sure it *never* happens again! It is extremely *unreasonable* to respond to evil and sin by abandoning Truth and goodness! For instance, when someone encounters a liar, is it reasonable to deny or negate the existence, necessity, and goodness of honesty? When we encounter a thief, is it reasonable to negate the existence, necessity, and value of private property?

Brothers and sisters, we cannot allow the sins and evil of others to destroy our Catholic faith—our *own* relationship with Christ *in and through* His Catholic Church. If a person tragically loses their Catholic faith because of a scandal inside the Church or a bad experience with a priest or nun, then sadly, but honestly, one may wonder whether or not that person’s faith was ever strongly built in the first place on the solid foundation of Christ our Savior, Who is Truth incarnate!

Our merciful Savior is inviting us to root our faith deeply in *Him* and *His Church*. And when I say “His Church” I don’t mean that we should *root* our faith in the human leaders of the institutional Church. Rather, we should root our faith in Christ and the *mission and identity* of His Catholic Church, which He established to proclaim His Gospel to all people for all times. You shouldn’t root your entire Catholic faith in me or Fr. Tom or any bishop or pope. You should root your faith *entirely* in Christ and the *mission* of His Catholic Church. Our Lord Jesus wants all of us to root our faith *in Him* and in the eternal and unchanging Truths of our Catholic faith—a faith that He has given us *through* His Church.

Out of His infinite love for us, our Lord Jesus will *never* abandon us in the midst of evil, suffering, and darkness—therefore, as His disciples, we must *never* abandon *Him* in the midst of scandal and evil. And brothers and sisters, the unfortunate and tragic reality is that since Her beginning, there has been and always will be sin in the Church until the end of time. In fact, our Lord Jesus explicitly reveals this to us in the Gospels when He tells the parable of the wheat and the weeds. I mean, St. Peter who was the leader of the 12 Apostles, denied Christ 3 times and was later forgiven. And the truth is that we're all sinners who are in need of ongoing conversion and transformation in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, when it comes to our Catholic faith, *the Truth is the Truth* and *nothing* can change that. So don't be afraid, because no scandal or sin can destroy the Truth that God exists, that He sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ into the world to save humanity from sin and death, and that our Lord established His One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to proclaim the Gospel until the end of time.

Our faith is in eternal Truth, Who is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, and as the Letter to the Hebrews tells us, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”