

Entrusted with Much or Little: Being Good Stewards

Recently I came across an article that identified a pattern in the life of the Catholic Church in roughly chunks of about 500 years. The fall of the Roman Empire around 476AD and the onset of The Dark Ages. The Church was often all that was left to maintain society and help those in need for the next 500 years.

In the eleventh century there was a humongous schism, a split within the Church especially in Asia and the East which resulted in the birth of the Orthodox faith (Greek Catholics/Greek Orthodox; Russian Catholics/Russian Orthodox; Ukrainian Catholics/Ukrainian Orthodox). This was 1054AD.

A little less than 500 years later another split, the Protestant Revolution in the early to mid-1500's. In each case the Catholic Church was under enormous attack and yet somehow found a way through each of these periods, regained her footing and began to flourish once again. Now in 2018 there is this worldwide experience of internal corruption of clergy and bishops. Another time of testing and upheaval and loss of unity.

Now go back to today's readings:

Isaiah 50—They beat me. I let them. They pulled out my beard. I let them. They spat in my face. Yes they did. I did not shield my face. No I didn't. I did, however, set my face like flint. It was hard to do. But yes, I set my face like flint despite the evil and corruption around me.

James—Faith is vitally important—all the time. But faith by itself—it is not enough. Our faith has to be backed up and re-enforced by what we do, our deeds. It needs to be lived—despite the evil around us whether in the world or in the Church.

Mark—Who do people say that I am? Asks Jesus. And who do you say that I am? Jesus asks you and me. Don't stop following the Lord because of what Judas did or Peter or any of those around him did—or did not do.

My friends, we are tempted to walk away sometimes. Many have. Some have come back. Many have not. But I affirm this truth to you. There is nothing better out there. There is nothing better than Jesus Christ available to us in this world. But we have to fight for our faith, for our church. There is nothing automatic about it. We have to translate our faith into deeds—especially right now.

You don't always see the good you do. Last year you contributed over \$30,000 to assist the poor in our area and we did. You helped to house and feed the homeless and you did. You contributed \$60,000 to the Annual Catholic Charities Appeal to help all manner of individuals who struggle. And you did give. We distribute in food cards and

rental assistance and heat and electricity bills almost \$1000 a week from this parish. You provide the money. Please know the good you do. Without you—none of that happens.

You do it because of your faith in Jesus. What Jesus provides is a way to live in a world which is terribly damaged by the effects of sin and selfishness. Actually what Jesus provides is **THE WAY** to live in this world. There is nothing better. But we must be clear. His way? It includes the cross, includes this suffering that comes from deception and selfishness and sin. And to be clear again: We are asked to embrace this cross and make it our own—as he did. Don't shun it. Don't run from it. Embrace it and you will find yourself and love yourself and others and the living God.

Thank you for the way you share your resources with all your fellow parishioners—your money, your time, your enthusiasm, your creativity. After Mass you will have the opportunity to indicate how you might be willing to share of yourself this year with those in need. There are Commissions and Ministries and opportunities to pray. And don't forget to offer the graces of your Eucharist each Sunday.