

The Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year B/2018 –
18/19 August 2018 – (Version 2) B
(Tallmadge Circle Fest 5:30 PM)
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community –
HOMILY

1st Reading:

Proverbs 9:1-6

- “Wisdom has built her house, . . . she has dressed her meat, mixed her wine, yes, she has spread her table. . . . “Let whoever is simple turn in here”; to the one who lacks understanding, she says, “Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed! Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding.” “

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 34 - *Sung*

2nd Reading:

Ephesians 5:15-20

- “Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord. . . . be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.”

GOSPEL:

JOHN 6:51-58

- “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats . . . has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. . . . Whoever eats . . . and drinks . . . remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life
- because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

I. “I am the living bread that came down from heaven . . . and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.”

Wow! What a gift we have! Wow! How blest we are!

Day after day . . . Sunday after Sunday . . . **Jesus given to us by the Father . . . made present to us through the power of the Spirit . . . GIVES himself to us!** In song . . . in prayer . . . in Word . . . and in the **most** mysterious and ever-so-real way . . . **in the Eucharist!** The life he has **because of the Father** is the **life we have** because of this **Eucharist . . . this ultimate Communion!**

That’s what you and I have been hearing about in a particular way over the past four weekends . . . and yes, this weekend as well.

And, earlier this week . . . after prayer and reflection . . . I prepared a Homily to help us continue along this path of trying to help us . . . help me and help you . . . grow in our understanding of and **love** of this great gift . . . **Eucharist** and Christ’s abiding presence in and through it.

But then, the elephant crept into the room . . . a few weeks ago . . . perhaps, not necessarily getting in the way at that time . . . but now . . . on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week . . . decided to try to park itself right in the center of the room, and I realized, I needed to pass on the first Homily prepared, and address the elephant in the room in this Homily.

II. The elephant first made its way into the room in June, when it was reported that, now former, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, then, the former archbishop of Washington, D.C., had been removed from public ministry based on credible and substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of a minor. As the story unfolded and developed, other reports of sexual misconduct came to light, and, in late July, Pope Francis accepted Theodore McCarrick's resignation as a Cardinal. Pending the outcome of both the civil investigation and the church's canonical process which may result in further action being taken, the former archbishop has been directed by the Pope to observe a life of prayer and penance . . .

The elephant moved into the center of the room this past Tuesday and in the days that followed, when it was reported that a Pennsylvania Grand Jury that had been convened, published its findings that in 6 of 8 Diocese in the state of Pennsylvania, over the course of the past 60-70

years, over 1,000 identifiable victims of child sexual abuse have been found involving more than 300 priests, the handling of which, by still other Church leaders, is being seriously and vigorously investigated.

What are we to make of all of this? What are we to do? Just two (2) of hundreds of questions being asked . . . questions that must be asked . . . answers that must be found.

III. Whatever words I offer, I fully recognize, will be welcomed by some, and rejected, ridiculed, seen to be inadequate and too little, by others . . . but for the moment . . . they are the only words I have . . .

To the victims of sexual abuse . . . no matter where they are from . . . no matter who they are . . . and no matter who the perpetrators have been . . . whether of the Church or not . . . words cannot express my sorrow for what you have suffered and, in far too many instances, continue to suffer.

To the victims of sexual abuse . . . I, along with, I pray, each of us here present . . . as well as clergy, religious and faithful throughout the Church . . . make the words and the commitment of Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, President of the United States Conference of

Catholic Bishops . . . joined with the words of Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of Lafayette in Indiana, as well as those of our own Bishop Nelson J. Perez . . . “We pray that all survivors of sexual abuse find healing, comfort and strength in God’s loving presence as the Church pledges to continue to restore trust through accompaniment, communion, accountability and justice.”, my words . . . **our words!**

There are many, many steps that must yet be completed . . . many actions that must yet be taken . . . and this will test our patience, since, the pain happened in an instant and yet these pieces necessary for healing for “accompaniment, communion, accountability and justice” seem to take far too long . . . but graced patience and resoluteness we must seek. The temptation for knee-jerk reactions must take a back-seat to the need for well-crafted and well-informed responses. And yes, we have a responsibility to get our house in order, and I do believe there are many, many good people working diligently and hard to do just that . . .

On Thursday of this week, Cardinal DiNardo issued another statement mapping out the work of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are undertaking to, not only “accompany and be in communion” with those who have suffered abuse, but enact what is absolutely necessary for clear “accountability and justice”. Cardinal DiNardo will

be traveling to Rome to present these goals to the Holy See, goals that will be presented to the full body of United States Bishops in their November meeting, urging both to enact further, concrete steps based on these goals, goals that will be pursued “according to three criteria: proper independence . . . “free from bias or undue influence by a bishop”; sufficient authority, since “only the Pope has authority to discipline or remove bishops”, and while respecting that authority, also making certain that we have in place the tools to “protect the vulnerable from the abuse of ecclesial power.”; and substantial leadership by laity.”, who “bring expertise in areas of investigation, law enforcement, psychology, and other relevant [and necessary] disciplines”, “their presence [reinforcing the Bishops’] first criterion of independence.”

Again, as the Cardinal has stated publicly, “The overarching goal in all of this is stronger protections against predators in the Church and anyone who would conceal them, protections that hold bishops to the highest standards of transparency and accountability.”, further stating “I apologize and humbly ask your forgiveness for what my brother bishops and I have done and failed to do. Whatever the details may turn out to be regarding Archbishop McCarrick or the many abuses in Pennsylvania (or anywhere else), we already know that one root cause is the failure of episcopal leadership., calling what has happened

a “moral catastrophe”, and more . . . but also acknowledging that “so many faithful priests who are pursuing holiness and serving with integrity are tainted by this failure.

The goals, rooted in the “criteria” presented are: First, an “investigation into the questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick”. Answers to these questions are “necessary to prevent a recurrence, and so help to protect minors, seminarians, and others who are vulnerable in the future. [The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops] will invite the Vatican to conduct an Apostolic Visitation to address these questions, in concert with a group of predominantly lay people identified for their expertise by members of the National Review Board **and empowered to act.**

The second is to open “new and confidential channels for reporting complaints against bishops.” making the reporting of abuse and misconduct by bishops easier. This will include updating a 2002 “Statement of Episcopal Commitment” to make this clearer as well as developing and “widely promoting reliable third-party reporting mechanisms.” “Such tools already exist in many dioceses and in the public sector.”

The third is “advocacy for more effective resolution of [any possible] future complaints”, in particular, “advocating

for better procedures to resolve complaints against bishops.”, an example of which would be “canonical procedures that follow a complaint [that] will be studied with an eye toward concrete proposals to make them more prompt, fair, and transparent and to specify what constraints may be imposed on bishops [by fellow bishops] at each state of that process”, since currently, the Pope is the only one to possess such authority.

While the evil of sexual abuse, especially among our most vulnerable members and perpetrated by those who are seen to be our most trusted ministers, is not limited to the Church but remains far too pervasive in our world, it must **end** in our Church and **everywhere**.

As such, the Church’s response, actions and safeguards that take place through “accompaniment, communion, accountability and justice”, should be a leaven for what must happen in every community throughout our world.

The Church **has** always and **must** always be that force, with God’s grace, Christ’s power and the Spirit’s guidance, to transform what is evil and not of God into what is good and most definitely of God, whether that necessary transformation be an end to sexual abuse, an end to

abortion, the elimination of the death penalty, an end to hunger, poverty, war, and the list is endless.

This **is** the sacred mission the Catholic Church has **always** been entrusted with by our Lord . . . reverencing and respecting all human life . . . from the moment of conception until natural death and guiding that life . . . accompanying that life . . . to eternal communion with God.

This is **our** mission . . . **yours** and **mine** . . . this is what we, saints and sinners together, have done for centuries and must continue to do . . . continuing to build on the **good** that has been done . . . **is** done . . . must **always** be done . . . taking seriously the promise of the Lord's . . . the "**living bread that has come down from heaven**" . . . so that **we** and **all**, who feed on Him, will have **life** because of Him.

IV. There are those who have asked, do ask, will ask, "Why . . . why do you choose to remain Catholic? Why do you choose to continue to be a member of a Church that employs pedophiles . . . that has some in leadership that cover up such horrendous evils? Why?" To which I respond, "Because I believe in Jesus Christ! And that belief means this: If God, the Father, through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, day in and day out, **changes** the **lifeless** gifts of bread and wine into the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ . . . giving these changed gifts to me

. . . this Jesus Christ to **me** . . . **me**, who am alive . . . then I, too, can be and am **changed** into this gift that comes to me. And if **I** can be . . . if **I** am **changed**, so can every member of this Church be **changed** as well, without exception. And I **choose** to be part of that.” May these words become **our** words as well.”