

Bulletin column for September 2, 2018
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Over the years I have been asked why I stay in the Catholic Church. It is most often asked in reference to the role of women in the church. In the past few weeks, though, I've heard the question asked often because of the latest scandal regarding abusive priests as revealed in the grand jury report in Pennsylvania. For many, enough is enough.

There are many reasons I stay. I resonate with a blogger on this topic who said "My faith is more naturally compared to the complicated bonds of family and tribe, a place where you feel most at home even when the people in your own living room sometimes drive you mad." There is so much good in the church, but the church is comprised of flawed human beings and so there is both darkness and light. We appear to be mired in mostly darkness right now, but I truly believe the good still outweighs the evil. The world is a better place because the church exists.

Let me give you a concrete example. An article on *servant leadership* caught my attention in last Sunday's *Journal Sentinel*. A young man, a chief technology officer of a Milwaukee-based startup company who is promoting this concept of leadership, was featured. He gave seven examples of servant leadership including "service to the community" for which he gave this illustration:

Early in my career, I was so eager to advance my career that I could not have imagined spending precious time serving others. I was hyper-competitive and, to be honest, selfish. One time a good friend of mine convinced me to serve at the homeless shelter at St. Benedict the Moor. I was in awe when I saw Marquette University President Michael Lovell, who was then chancellor at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, serving food to the homeless. He wasn't accompanied by the press or even a colleague. He came alone and left alone. That encounter altered my thinking at the time.

He wasn't accompanied by the press or even a colleague? Really? That was your reaction ... or your expectation? Michael Lovell has been public about his Catholic faith and when he made the move from UWM to Marquette, he mentioned that his faith was an important factor. It was his faith that, no doubt, drew him to St. Ben's that day. It wasn't any expectation of publicity. He was quietly living his faith because that's what we do. The meal program at St. Ben's exists because as Christians we are called to feed the hungry. Day after day Catholic Christians throughout the world serve the needs of the most vulnerable. Jesus, who was the ultimate servant leader, calls us to do exactly that.

The Catholic Church has taught me and formed me and supported me as I live that life. It brings out the best in me. Granted other Christian faiths would do the same, but this church is the one that has been home for me. At the same time, I agree with that blogger who also said, "I've lost trust in some bishops and cardinals. I still believe in the people of God."

We are all the People of God. That sometimes gets lost in the clericalism of the church. (Clericalism could be the topic of another article.) Our church definitely needs reform. The current way is not working. As the People of God, we need to challenge the hierarchy so that abuses of any kind never happen again. We need to make sure that the church always reflects the goodness and wisdom and presence of God. We need to accept the fact that that is the responsibility of us all. Only then will the church be able to be reformed.

Debbie