

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday

***“Master to whom shall we go?” (Jn 6:68)***

I am standing behind the Ambo today to protect myself in case someone wants to shoot me!

First of all, I want to thank Frank Maher to share this story with me.

Frank is a parishioner. Every Wednesday he visits the Harris County Jail downtown to bring Holy Communion to about 30 Catholic inmates there.

And each week he meets different people and different experiences.

He invites anyone who wants to say a group prayer to come forward.

On one particular Wednesday, He said, “A group of men came forward to pray together, and as we were about to pray someone from the back yelled out:

**“I am an atheist and American, and I don’t want to listen to your prayers.”**

Someone from the prayer group yelled back, **“Shut up Pop.”**

This agitated Pop and Pop yelled louder.

**“As an American I don’t have to listen to these prayers.”**

Frank began to worry. He said, “I could feel the tempers starting to elevate.

Again, someone from the prayer group yelled, **“Shut up POP!”**

Frank said, “I am praying trying to think of what I should say and stay calm and keep the inmates calm as well.”

Pop yelled back louder for the third time,

**“I do not have to listen to these prayers as an American!”**

One of the prayer group people leaned over and said,

**“Hold on preacher, I am going to go back there and shut him up.”**

Now Frank started to get worried, thinking he was about to witness a fight and might actually be caught in the middle of it.

He said, he has always been a God fearing man and has known that God would protect him and guide him in his times of greatest need. And he said, “Suddenly, a calm came over me and I told the men in the prayer group to hold on, and I called out to Pop”

**“Hey Pop, we are all Americans, right? And as Americans, we also have the right to pray.”**

Things got quiet and all eyes were on Pop. Pop looked at Frank straight in the eye from afar and said, **“Since you put it that way . . . go ahead and pray.”**

Frank said, “I cannot tell you how thankful I was that my prayer was answered. A situation that could have turned out very badly ended peacefully and we were able to pray as a group. God is good.”

I like that line, **“A situation that could have turned out very badly ended peacefully if we trust in God.”**

## The Crisis

Most of you have read or heard about the Grand Jury Report in Pennsylvania relating to Sexual abuses in 6 dioceses involving 300 priests and more than 1,000 victims in 70 years. We thought as the Church, we have handled this matter well since the Dallas Charter in 2002. We adopted “Zero” tolerance to sexual abusers in the Church.

Our shepherds failed us. They misled us. They told us that they had fixed the problem, and they hadn't. They told us that there would be no more cover-ups, but there were. They told us that they now understood the problem, but they didn't. Now the report is included the name of a prominent Cardinal Archbishop Theodore McCarrick. Sixteen years ago the public was shocked primarily by the loathsome activities of predatory priests, this year the focus is—quite rightly—on the bishops.

This is a shocking and painful news to hear. We are in a difficult and challenging situation. All of us are hurt, ashamed, saddened and angry. Many questions are being asked: Who knew about cardinal McCarrick's and covered it up for him? Priests, bishops and people are reacting to this report with anger and rage.

In his testimony, dated August 22, Archbishop Viganò, who served as apostolic nuncio in Washington D.C. from 2011-2016, states that in the late 2000s, Pope Benedict had “imposed on Cardinal McCarrick sanctions similar to those now imposed on him by Pope Francis,” and that Viganò personally spoke with Pope Francis about the gravity of McCarrick's abuse soon after his election in 2013.

But he says that Pope Francis “continued to cover him” and not only did he “not take into account the sanctions that Pope Benedict had imposed on him” but also made McCarrick “his trusted counselor” who helped him to appoint a number of bishops in the United States, including Cardinals Blase Cupich of Chicago and Joseph Tobin of Newark.

Archbishop Viganò also implicates Cardinals Sodano, Bertone and Parolin in the cover-up and insists various other cardinals and bishops were well aware, including Cardinal Donald Wuerl, McCarrick's successor as Archbishop of Washington D.C.

“I myself brought up the subject with Cardinal Wuerl on several occasions; it was clear to me that he was fully aware of it.” The Cardinal's “recent statements that he knew nothing about it ... are absolutely laughable. He lies shamelessly.”

“Cardinal Wuerl, well aware of the continuous abuses committed by Cardinal McCarrick and the sanctions imposed on him by Pope Benedict, transgressing the Pope's order, also allowed him to reside at a seminary in Washington D.C. In doing so, he put other seminarians at risk,” he attests.

A widely respected figure, Archbishop Vigano says his “conscience dictates” that the truth be known as “the corruption has reached the very top of the Church’s hierarchy.” He ends his testimony by calling on Pope Francis and all of those implicated in the cover up of McCarrick’s abuse to resign.

How are we facing this crisis? Our frustration and anger must be led by by Holy Spirit, not the devil’s.

### **Facing the Crisis**

**(CNN)**A 64 years old Catholic priest, Fr. Basil John Hutsko, was beaten while praying at his church in Merrillville, Indiana, last Monday morning.

The attacker "grabbed him by the neck, threw him down on the floor and slamming his head against the floor."

He was left there battered, bruised and unconscious for about 15 minutes. And during the assault the attacker yelled, "This is for all the little kids."

These are some messages I received from our parishioners:

*1) Many of our parishioners are waiting to hear what your plans are to address the thousands of lives that have been destroyed by the acts of priests throughout the country over decades! And also the disgusting cover up and promotions within the church. Our children are not safe. Families have been torn apart. St. Max took quiet step to help victims of the hurricane last year. Why have you not responded to this crisis? We are angry and disgusted – What are you going to do?*

*(2) I contribute every week with a check. However, I am replacing my check with this notification to get the church to clean up the sex scandal that continues year after year after year. This needs to be addressed and passed up the management chain until the church leadership quits sweeping this under the rug, acknowledges the issue, addresses and changes the culture and makes this horrific sin stop. The guilty and the enablers must be held responsible for their actions. This has to stop. This needs immediate attention from the church.*

*(3) Please let us know what the parish and diocese is doing to help the victims and the church heal from the sex abuse. What will be done in the future to correct and prevent this? We are the parish and the Church. We are all in this mess. St Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians, **“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it.”**(1Cor 12:26).*

### **Responding to the Crisis**

All good priests are hurt too. I am hurt and ashamed too. The thought of leaving my priestly ministry has crossed my mind too, but I have resolved not to let this crisis to defeat me. Not to let the sinful behaviors and criminal acts of other priests, bishops, cardinals, to stop me from serving God in the Church. Prayers, fasting and grace and your support, give me courage and

determination to be a good priest. You can trust me. Fr. Michael and I are not abusers. I love our children; and I believe they love me too. We are all in this crisis together. What we can do is to support one another. If you know any wrong doing of any priest or deacon please report them. The Archdiocese has the policy and guidelines for reporting suspected abuse of a minor. Virtus training is required of anyone works in the parish, employees and volunteers.

If you are good and trustworthy Catholics, please sign up to be catechists and chaperons to our children and be part of youth ministry here at the parish.

What else we can do. Recruit and send your young men to the seminary to study to become priests. We cannot expect to have good priests from heaven or somewhere else; **good priests come from good families, and good parenting and good religious formation.**

*We love our children and they are safe here with us. I need your support to take care of our children, not fearful but be proactive in the mission to hand on our faith to our children. . .*

The devil is smarter than us. Even if we try our best, the devil still able to intrude into the Church to harm us. We need to be vigilant and continue committing ourselves to serve God and God's people, not division but united, not fearful but trusting in God's power, not angry but being patient, not guided by the devil but by the Holy Spirit.

It is very sad and disappointed to find out that even bishops and cardinals committed this horrific crime. McCarrick even abused the first boy whom he had baptized after his ordination! Some people wonder what happened to the sacraments he celebrated? What happened to the Masses and ordinations, weddings and confirmations that he performed?

We can look at it this way. You have nice set of china or you have the paper and plastic goods to serve a meal. The meal is the meal. Paper goods or China set are only a means. After the meal, you throw away the used paper plates and plastic spoons and forks. You wash your nice china set and silverwares to use it again later. I am your good china set and silverwares.

Do not let this scandal even it is horific and nauseated to block our eyes so we cannot see the power of God in the Church.

Do not let this block our minds that we cannot see the power of God over the power of evils in the Church.

Do not let it block our hearts that we cannot continue to love the saints, the victims and the sinners as well.

Victims need healing. Sinners need redemption. We need courage and wisdom. We are doing good and being good because we are good people.

We do not stop doing good and being good because someone else or others priests or bishops are doing bad things.

Joshua tells his people, **"If it does not please you to serve the Lord, decide today whom you will serve . . . As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."**

St. John mentions in the Gospel reading, "Many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanies him."

**Jesus then said to the twelve, “Do you also want to leave?”**

Simon Peter answers, **“Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”**

Let us heed the most powerful message that St. John Paul II left us as an inheritance: ***Do not be afraid! Do not be afraid!***

In his 2008 homily on the Feast of the Epiphany, Pope Benedict reminded us that the Father’s plan of salvation had been fully revealed and realized in the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, but it needs to be welcomed in human history, which is always a history of fidelity on God’s part and unfortunately also of infidelity on the part of us men. The Church, the depository of the blessing of the New Covenant, signed in the blood of the Lamb, is holy but made up of sinners, as Saint Ambrose wrote: the Church is *“immaculata ex maculatis,”* she is holy and spotless even though, in her earthly journey, she is made up of men stained with sin.

Even in dismay and sadness over the enormity of what is happening, **let us not lose hope!** We well know that the great majority of our pastors live their priestly vocation with fidelity and dedication.

It is in moments of great trial that the Lord’s grace is revealed in abundance and makes His limitless mercy available to all; but it is granted only to those who are truly repentant and sincerely propose to amend their lives. This is a favorable time for the Church to confess her sins, to convert, and to do penance.

**Let us all pray for the Church and for the Pope, let us remember how many times he has asked us to pray for him!**

**Christ will never abandon His Church! He generated her in His Blood and continually revives her with His Spirit!**

**Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us!**

**Mary, Virgin and Queen, Mother of the King of glory, pray for us!**

Let us all renew faith in the Church our Mother: **“One, holy, catholic and apostolic Church!”**  
“Master! You have the words of eternal life.” (Jn 6:68)

Fr. John Kha Tran  
St. Maximilian Kolbe