

- While I had a homily prepared for today, I think it's important for me to make a few remarks about the recent scandals in our Church. I know I touched upon this last Sunday and spoke more at length about the evil of it all this past Wednesday on the Feast of the Assumption, but there are a few more things in my heart that I wish to share, things that need to be said.
- I know so many of us are angry and bewildered by the gravity of the evil that has been perpetrated by some leaders of the Church. I count myself among your number. Those of us who are called to Holy Orders are called to a greater level of holiness in this life, which makes the recent revelations all the more horrifying.
- I can only apologize for the sordid and sick actions of some of our Church leaders – and I do humbly and heartily - for what they've done affects us all. Frankly, I'm embarrassed and ashamed by their actions, and angry and sick at heart at the damage they've caused.
- And yet persisting in our anger is not the answer. While we must demand accountability from the leaders of our Church, and while we must demand that justice be served so that the perpetrators of such crimes are removed from ministry and justly punished, as faithful Catholics and disciples of Christ, we're called to more than just that.
- In charity, I think we have a couple of responsibilities that I hope you'll consider taking on. First, we must turn our thoughts to all victims of abuse within the Church, and pray for their healing – trusting that Christ is the Divine Physician and can bring healing and peace to their lives. Thousands of kids have lost their innocence, their childhood, because of the perversity of and sordid selfishness of some of the Church's leaders. Let's pray they can find peace and be restored to full mental and emotional health.
- Second, we must pray for the perpetrators – that they may repent of their wrongdoing and make amends for it in some way. Obviously, these are men in need of our prayers. We should pray for them to repent and make amends through the just punishments they receive.
- At the same time, we mustn't allow the bad actions of these priests and bishops to damage our faith in the Church. Regardless of the sins committed by her human leaders, the Church is still the Bride of Christ and God's instrument to bring salvation to men.
- While we may be tempted to turn away from the Church right now, we cannot do so. For as I mentioned last Sunday, our faith cannot be in men, but in God and in His Church. If we want a better Church, then we need to stay in Her and be the best Catholics we can be. If we want the Church to be purified, we must do our part by being pure and virtuous ourselves.
- This past week I saw a photo taken shortly after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The photo showed a bombed out church where a solemn high Mass was taking place. What struck me about the photo was that, despite the ruins of the church, there was still a glory to be seen in the offering of the Mass. And it appeared that there were thousands of faithful people present.

- I think this is the way we need to see the Church right now. While this scandal may seem overwhelmingly damaging to the Church, there is still a glory that shines within Her. While in Her humanity the Church may look like a bombed-out sordid mess, yet in Her divinity She is the spotless Bride of Christ. More than ever, Holy Mother Church needs faithful children to stay by her side.
- Third, we must also turn our minds to God and how He has been so gravely offended by these actions. While God is all-merciful, He is also just. This type of evil does not go unnoticed by God. And so I think it's important that we make reparation for the sins of the Church.
- To this end, I've decided that on September 14, which is the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross, we will have a Holy Hour of Reparation and a Mass of reparation to atone for the sins of our leaders and to pray for healing for the victims. Until then, I ask you to consider fasting from something that you like as a means of making reparation. I will be doing the same.
- On a positive note, Cardinal DiNardo of Houston, who is the President of the USCCB, has issued a very good statement on the concrete steps being taken to ensure that this kind of moral catastrophe never happens again. While I tend to be a little leery about such statements, the fact that their plans include significant leadership by the laity, I have some hope. You can find Cardinal DiNardo's statement on the homepage of the USCCB website; it's worth reading.
- Lastly, I hope you won't overlook all of the good things that are going on in the Diocese of Charlotte and in our little parish. We are really blessed here. When I think about how the Church responds to this crisis, I think we have one of the very best responses that the Church can make right here: it's St. Joseph's College Seminary and our diocesan religious community: the Daughters of the Virgin Mother.
- Our seminarians are all good and faithful young men, men who are being formed to be pure and upright priests right here – amongst all of you. And the Daughters are faithful young women who are sacrificing their lives for the sake of the priesthood.
- So please pray for them, for they are the future of our Church. They're the ones who are going to be roles of leadership in the future. And as I consider the quality of the young men and women from our diocese who are pursuing religious vocations – including the 5 seminarians and 2 religious sisters from our parish – I have great hope for our future.
- In closing, I ask you to kneel down and pray 3 Hail Mary's with me in reparation for the sins of the Church.