

- In the wake of several LGBT marches and demonstrations in Poland this summer, there's been an outbreak of violence against Catholic priests, as well as the desecration and destruction of Church property all over that staunchly Catholic country.
- Marches supposedly organized in the name of tolerance and anti-discrimination have shown to engender precisely the opposite when it comes to our Catholic Faith.
- Yet when a pride march was organized in the city of Plock last weekend, a 15-year old boy named Jakub Baryla very courageously, quietly, and peacefully stood in the path of the 1000-person strong march with a crucifix and a rosary. He was eventually carried off by police in riot gear.
- Iconic pictures of the stoic Jakub both in front of the parade with crucifix and rosary held aloft and being carried off by police spread quickly around the globe.
- Since last week, this young man has been verbally attacked and criticized for being a hateful homophobe, and yet he made a very critical distinction in explaining why he stood up as he did.
- Jakub said, "Jesus and the cross stood against evil and sins. Our holy faith commands us to counteract evil deeds. I also tried to do it. Saying that I was going against people is harmful, I was going against the bad deeds that are promoting homosexuality."
- He said further: "Defending the Holy Faith against attacks is not a rejection but a necessity, and love does not mean accepting bad behavior. I do not reject anyone, because our Lord did not reject anyone."
- In other words, Jakub was not protesting against LGBT people, but against the sin of homosexual behavior and the violence against the Catholic Church committed in the name of the LGBT agenda.
- This is in good keeping with our Catholic sense to love the sinner but hate the sin.
- As our own city is hosting a pride march this weekend, Jakub's example gives us something to think about. Specifically, are we willing to stand against evil and sin, and fight for our Faith?
- While we may not be martyred in the flesh, are we willing to be martyred on Facebook or Twitter for upholding the teachings of our Church?
- Are we willing to stand up for what we know is true, good, and beautiful, and put up with injustice for doing so as did the Prophet Jeremiah in our first reading?
- How far are we willing to go in order to be perfectly united with our Lord and defend the teachings and beliefs of His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church?
- Today our Lord tells us that He not come to establish peace on the earth but rather division. Our gentle Jesus tells us today that He has come to set the earth on fire.
- From this Gospel passage it is clear that Jesus had no illusions about the opposition He would face in His ministry on earth. He knew that He would be hated.
- So how do we reconcile this passage with the Gospel images of Jesus so generously healing the sick and lame, and so gently calling children to Himself? Didn't Jesus die for us all, and doesn't He want all of us to be one body in Him?
- Yes, Jesus did die for all mankind without exception. And yes, He does want us all to be united as one body. But that unity is not contingent upon Him, but rather upon us. If there is a division between Christ and us, it is not Christ's fault.
- And the hard truth is that while our blessed Lord desires the salvation of all men more than anything else, He will allow us to damn ourselves if we fail to reconcile ourselves to Him and the Truth He has revealed through His Church.
- This why we must never presume upon our salvation. Yes, salvation is a free gift given by God. Yes, God is merciful beyond measure and will pardon even the very gravest of sins if we are sorry for them.

- But our salvation is a process with which we must cooperate. Specifically, we must conform our lives to our Lord's teaching as it is divinely revealed to us through the Church. And we must beg pardon for those times that we fail.
- We must seek out the Truth that our Lord has so lovingly revealed in the teachings of the Church and written upon our hearts, and then do our best to live by that Truth.
- We must come to know Christ, to love Christ, and to be like Christ.
- Because Jesus Christ is our brother and friend, we must be intimate with Him in prayer. Because He is our savior, we must constantly thank and adore Him. And because Christ will be our Judge, we must obey Him and seek His mercy for our sins.
- As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us today, we must "rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us, while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith."
- But as with all things, we must not think only of ourselves. True charity demands that we try to help others along the path of salvation. And so the life of the Christian is necessarily evangelical by nature – helping others to know the truth and live by it.
- The primary way that we evangelize is by living our Catholic faith with authenticity, for we cannot hope that others will adopt our faith if we ourselves are failing to live it well. But living our faith with integrity is only the beginning.
- In a society such as ours that is now embracing as normal and good a whole host of evil and perverse practices, we must also be willing to engage in battle with evil.
- In a society such as ours that understands contraception as a necessity, abortion as a fundamental right, pornography as a pastime, and same sex unions as a matter of equality, we must hold fast to and promote our Catholic teachings with all the more tenacity – for souls are being lost to these evils in our midst.
- Indeed, my brothers and sisters, we must be so convinced of the Truth of what Christ teaches us through His Church that we are willing to suffer the loss of relationships with loved ones rather than deny or disobey that Truth.
- We must be willing to suffer the pain that division with others brings in order to remain true to Jesus and to help others know Him. That's the meaning of today's Gospel!
- There can be no doubt that living our Catholic faith with integrity is difficult today because it requires nothing less than dying to ourselves so that Christ may live in us. Our faith demands that we suffer, for there is no Catholicism without the cross.
- Moreover, our world is filled with many temptations and with so many charlatans who, tickling our ears with lies and half-truths, sow doubts in our faith and distort the truths of Christ's teachings.
- Yet we must not be discouraged, even when those we love turn away from us because of our adherence to our Catholic faith. We must not be discouraged even when we have to suffer for our faith, as did poor Jeremiah in our first reading.
- For as Jesus told His disciples during His sermon on the mount: "Blessed are you when they insult you, and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in Heaven" (Mt 5:12).
- Brethren, none of us likes to be at odds with others. None of us likes to suffer the pains of division or persecution. Certainly, we should never seek division with others, but being true disciples of Christ may necessitate it.
- Our readings today ask us the question if we are willing to suffer division for our faith. For the sake of souls, let us resolve to suffer whatever divisions necessary in this life so that we may not suffer eternal division from Christ in the next.