

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time 2018

From what I can tell from our Scriptures, Jesus didn't get too upset about that many things, but one thing that definitely set him off was hypocrisy. The Scriptures ring just as true today as they did in his time. Make no mistake: Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders of his time and of ours when he says, "[W]ell did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites. Your hearts are far from me."

Granted, not all of the religious leaders in Jesus' time were hypocrites--look at Nicodemus. And not all of the religious leaders of our time are hypocrites, but some are. OK, but what do I do with that knowledge?

This is the problem that has been on the periphery of this issue for me. I'm feeling a sense of powerlessness. I'm not the Pope or a bishop or cardinal. I can't make the changes that I think should be made. Also I'm not hearing them say, OK, we have to make some changes. I know the Church moves slowly, but I need to hear something other than a statement that says their hearts are with the victims (which is great, but I also need the "and"—"and we're going to change," which I have not heard yet.)

So I'm still waiting and asking myself, what is within my power? I can't change the Pope or bishops or cardinals or the Church. I only have the power to change myself. So what in me needs to change? What in our

community needs to change? Jesus tells the crowd (you and me), don't worry about those things that are happening externally--that is not what will destroy you; it's the things within.

Since this new wave of abuse has surfaced I have been internalizing this stuff, and it's like a poison. I feel less joy. I got no game. So how do I reverse that? Jesus summed up the reading from Deuteronomy by commanding us to love God and love our neighbor. I've got no problem with loving God. It's the neighbor, particularly the neighbor who sins. How do I love them?

Every day, at daily Mass, in the Prayers of the Faithful, I pray this prayer: "For our enemies, that God may bless them abundantly and that we may reach out to them with greater love." I've got to tell you I look at the perpetrators as enemies. So I guess I'm saying to myself, hey, put your money where your mouth is. Don't just give God lip service. If I really am who I say I am, a disciple of Christ, then I'm going to let God be God and let God judge them and I'm going to love them."

Now I'm not doing a really good job at that lately. So I have to step up my game. If I'm going to stay (and I am), I have to be a doer of the word, not just a hearer. I have to take care of the poor and keep myself unstained, as James says in his letter. But I have to do more than that. I also have to protest, meaning I have to speak up. I don't want the bishops

to come up with a response to this on their own; they haven't done a good job on their own. I have to offer them other ways, give them constructive suggestions, and so do you.

They've made a mess of things, but so did the religious leaders of Jesus' time. God did not give up on them, and God will not give up on us. The early Church grew because they recognized and acknowledged the giftedness residing in the community of believers--not because there was a pope but because of the Christ in the community. The Spirit--it is time that the people of God unleash the Spirit.