

Today we heard our fifth and final selection from the Letter of James. I hope you picked up not only the content of the letter in the last month but more so on the no-nonsense delivery. James tells it like it is. No high-falutin' theology here, he lays it on the line as he exhorts us not to delude ourselves and be contaminated by the world. Instead he says to stay pure, care for the poor and needy (widows/orphans). Don't concentrate on the rich and famous lest we become blind to the poor around us. He's brutally honest about faith, stating that if we have no good works to show for it, then our faith is "dead". (His word, not mine.) We need to be sure we don't let our passions get the best of us, for that is the door which leads to war and division. We are to remain pure, gentle, merciful, and just. Finally, today, James warns us that if our wealth has been ill begotten, produced by cheating others, it condemns us. It makes me think of those chains around Jacob Marley's neck in Dicken's "A Christmas Carol". Tough stuff from James. He certainly does not mince words when it comes to *ethical conduct*. Speaking of *ethical conduct*, now there's something that's front and center in our world now, isn't it? I'll take a pass on commenting on the Supreme Court nomination mess, but in the spirit

of James, I would like to take a pragmatic look at something which I think is much more important, and that's the clerical scandals that plague the Church.

The majority of us, I'm betting, are justifiably angry as hell. We want all this wretched behavior to stop. But the only way we can be assured it stops, is if it is all revealed. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like it's going to happen voluntarily or quickly. We are going to be suffering through this for a number of years. But however long it takes, it all needs to come out, and then we must be honest in how we examine it and address it. Some people are already making up their minds about what it's all about, the root cause, and what must be done and to whom (in order) to solve the problem. I say, let's follow the suggestion of James to be pragmatic and as difficult as it is, patient. Once the facts are known, and again, this will take years, then we can begin, using our God-given faculties to assess, reason, and act with justice, compassion, and mercy.

For those folks who find themselves in one of these dioceses where the unspeakable went on for decades, was hidden, and the sick were allowed to be moved on where they continued to prey on the innocent, I don't blame them for

not wanting to send in a dime to their diocese until the truth is revealed and the guilty and those who covered up are exposed and removed entirely from any positions of power. For those of us in this diocese, we've basically gone through this already in various stages over the last 40 years. As far as we know, since the State of Minnesota temporarily lifted the statute of limitations a few years ago, all has been exposed, and except for a few lingering lawsuits, has been addressed. I know that at least when we give to our annual diocesan appeal and the programs supported by the Catholic Foundation such as the Catholic Ministries Appeal and the Seminary Burse that the funds go to the programs for which they are intended and not for any shenanigans or lawsuit payments. Thanks, by the way to everyone who got us so close to our CMA goal this year. Your faithfulness and generosity speak volumes.

What might Jesus say about all this? Well, interestingly enough, in our gospel readings from today and last week, Jesus does have relevant comments for us. Even better to help emphasize his point he holds an innocent child in his arms. Last week we heard him say that when we receive a child in his name, we receive Him. This week he warns that if anyone should inflict sin

upon an innocent child, that person will face the worst possible punishment: the unquenchable fire of Gehenna. Now it's true, if one looks at the reports on clerical abuse, we find that only about 5 or 6% of the victims were technically children. But regardless if they were children, teenagers, or young adult seminarians, they are innocent members of the body of Christ.

So, what do we do? As James tells us, we keep our heads, be as patient as possible, and search out the truth, all the while being faithful followers of Christ, performing good works in his name, be it mighty ones, or just as Jesus suggests today, offering refreshment to one in need. We must have faith. We are the body of Christ and He will help us drive out the wolves (whoever they may be), and with the help of the good and faithful, cleanse and (once again) claim our Church, His bride. Let us always pray first for the victims, then for the healing of our Church, and finally, as hard as it is, for the souls of those who are at risk of eternal punishment.