

In today's Gospel, 5,000 have left Jesus, scandalized by what he had said. Jesus asks a very human question to his apostles, are going to desert me too?

We know he is human as we learn that Jesus wept over the sins of ancient Jerusalem. Jesus still weeps today.

Thank you Sarah Yakic, a blogger on Grotto Network for helping me to put into words what I am feeling.

He weeps when people exploit innocent children for their own pleasure. He weeps when leaders exercise power as a means to abuse and weaken instead of using it to lead and transform. He weeps when sin assaults human dignity.

These days, I can't help but weep with Jesus. The allegations outlined in the Pennsylvania grand jury report have turned my world upside down. I know many of you feel the same.

I weep for the crimes committed against humanity. I weep because some members of Church leadership have failed those of us who look to them to be examples of love and integrity. I weep because the Church I know and love has become the target of public outrage.

Today, while I grieve, I stand with my Church. Despite the brokenness, I see God alive in our midst. I rest on our 2,000-year history and look to the future with hope.

I can rest in hope, because I see a purification taking place. The US bishops have called for reform, outlining goals for our Church that will be carried out through "proper independence, sufficient authority, and substantial leadership by laity."

Cardinal DiNardo, president of USCCB, stated: "I apologize and humbly ask your forgiveness for what my fellow bishops and I have done and failed to do."

Pope Francis, stated: "with shame and repentance, we acknowledge as a ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realizing the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives. We showed no care for the little ones, We abandoned them." He further acknowledged, "no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient."

He continues, this does not mean nothing can be done now, we must make every effort to

create a culture where this behavior will not be tolerated and we must “prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated.”

Pope Benedict, on his meeting with the College of Cardinals on Christmas Eve on his first Christmas as Pope asked them, How did our Church become a place where abusers of children could find refuge?

We must hold our leaders accountable. We must advocate for transparency. We must never stop dreaming of a future where dignity is restored.

The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago; the second best time is today.

Carl Andrews, who heads the Knights of Columbus in the United States, made the observation that, after years of Catholics having to confess their sins to the clergy, it is now time for priests and bishops to ask the laity for forgiveness,

What can we do?

Patrick Donovan, formerly the head of Youth Ministry in our diocese, now writes a weekly Blog. He says,

So, let’s start with prayer. Let us pray for those we know were abused and those who have yet to tell their story. Let us pray for those who will need to make the decision to hold others accountable. Let us pray for those who work every day to protect God’s children. Let us pray for those good men and women who wear their habit, robe, collar, and lapel pin and who have never abused, neglected, covered up, or conspired. Let us pray for the faithful who are thinking about walking away.

And let us pray for each other. In more than 2,000 years, the church – and Christianity itself – has undergone reform and renewal, suffered through difficult times and sinful times.

We place our trust and hope in the One whom Simon Peter said, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Is this enough? NO! But it is where we can start.

Deacon Luke Yackley--August 26, 2018

