

8 March 2019

Dear friends

During the past week and the weeks and the months beforehand we as a church have gone through a very difficult time. I am feeling the pain of being betrayed and let down by the organisation that I believed would help me in my journey towards Jesus. I am writing this not so much as an ordained minister, a Catholic priest, rather as a Catholic who believes in the goodness of the Lord and the love and support of the community. I thought my faith was strong but realised I too was completely shaken and my faith became very fragile in the face of what happened last week. During these days, I realised that I found it difficult to wake up as a Catholic believer and more so as a Catholic priest. The predicament was what next and where to from here? Am I in the best place or is this the best house to stay in? While I was going through these confusing and deeply disturbing questions, I found myself getting ready to do my morning prayers. Even though my lips were mumbling the words of prayer my heart was elsewhere and then in my wandering away from my prayers I remembered faces...faces of the people I see every Sunday every Saturday night at mass in the church...faces of our children at school and faces of their parents...I remembered the face of the dying man who held my hands one last time saying 'thank you' before breathing his last as I anointed him and prayed the last rites over him. I remembered the people I visit in their homes holding my hands and saying 'thank you for bringing Jesus to us'. I remembered the family who were losing their young mother and holding hands and forming a chain of prayer around their mother and praying the Our Father as their mother was slipping away. I remembered the faces of the countless people belonging to the various races, cultures and colours that I encounter every weekend, people seeking the face of God in and through our community.

Suddenly the penny dropped....this is my family...this is my community and I belong here and we belong to each other and together we belong to Jesus. We are a Jesus people journeying towards our God. This is my community; this is my church. This is where I am loved, appreciated and nurtured. Yes I realise that in the wider Church founded by Christ some leaders betrayed their people. And the bigger Church that I identify as the mother Church has its own share of evil, abuse and hypocrisy. This may not be the best of places that I want to be at this moment. While this house has gaping holes of injustice, cover-ups and sinfulness I cannot abandon this house and run away. How can I? My family is inside the house. I need to be here and together

we will muster up the courage to plug these holes and repair this house and put this house back in order so that our elderly people are looked after; where our children can feel, live and play safely; where all of us can feel and breathe the love of Christ; where strangers can walk in and smell the goodness of Jesus in the air. We must have the courage and the determination to leave this house as a place where our children's children can find a meaning and purpose to live safely and claim their faith with pride.

These days of pain have given us an opportunity to return to the centre our faith: Jesus Christ, son of God who came to live among us, died for us and rose again so that we might have the fullness of life. These challenging days have given us a reminder of the need to galvanize as one Faith community so that we can find strength, comfort and hope in each other and in our God. These deeply disturbing days have made me realise the importance of belonging to a community that cares. This is my community, this is my church. "Through your Holy Spirit, lead us as we turn to you for guidance, courage and faith... Together may we journey with YOU and with one another". (parish prayer).

Take care,  
God Bless!

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