

Mass in Reparation for Sins of Bishops & Priests Against Minors  
Texts: Genesis 4:3-10; Galatians 5:16-17, 19-26; Matthew 18:1-7, 10, 14  
5 September 2018  
© Rev. Paul R. Pluth, JCL

When God confronts Cain with what Cain has done to Abel, the defiant response of Cain is: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Our answer is: “Yes!” We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. Like Abel’s blood crying out from the soil, the broken lives of children, youth, and adults sexually abused by Church leaders cry out to God and to us, for justice to be done for them by us; for healing to be offered them by us; for abusive bishops and priests to be thrown out of ministry and power by us; for our Church to be made safe for and them and for us by us – so that the Church may truly be the Body of Christ in the world.

We are not powerless. We are not the tools of Church leaders. We have the power of the Holy Spirit, power given us when we were baptized, power making us – as our Church itself says – people with a mission. We are filled with the fruits of the Holy Spirit listed by St Paul – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and *self-control*. And, having been given the Holy Spirit, it is our responsibility to be courageous in intent and will to reform the Church. For, as St Paul says to St Timothy: “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” (*2 Timothy 1:7*)

This morning, using that power of the Holy Spirit is taking the form of a work of spiritual repair by us. In the Bible, St Paul – writing to some fellow Christians – says: “I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church.” (*Colossians 1:24*) I have never understood what St Paul was saying until this current crisis. By our spiritual offerings and our sacrifices for our brothers and sisters who are suffering, we are taking on their sufferings as Jesus Christ did, and we are completing Christ’s work of giving his life for the healing and repair of a world harmed by sin. That is our *spiritual* mission of reparation and healing.

But our mission does not end there. We’ve heard this morning Jesus’ dreadful warning:

If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck

and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. (*Matthew 18:6, 10*)

The guardian angels of the abuse victims stand before the throne of the Father in heaven, the everlasting Judge. These are the angels who, Jesus promises, will gather up all evildoers and causes of sin on the Last Day and throw them into the furnace of the fire of the Father's judgment. (*Matthew 13:40–42*) If there is no repentance by abusers, their eternal fate is sealed in the Father's heavenly justice. But, here on earth, along with our spiritual work of reparation, we can – and *must* – work for abusive bishops and priests, and bishops and priests who covered-up abuse, all to be brought to earthly justice, in order that their victims can be vindicated, and our Church can be purged of their evil and made safe, and in order that we can, once again, offer the good news of Jesus Christ to the world.

Jesus tells us, today, “It is *not* the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.” (*Matthew 18:14*) We can move forward in the hope of that promise of Jesus, and in the power of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that none of these little ones – or us – ever will be harmed or lost again.

Friends,

Thank you for coming this morning.

We are *not* here to *repent* of the harm done by the sins of bishops and priests against minors. We *are* here to take some steps to spiritually *repair* that harm, by our offering this Mass together, by our prayers, and by our receiving the Body and Blood of Christ to give us the courage and the will to go out and take earthly steps as well. This morning is not a one-time thing. We can continue to pray and fast or make other sacrifices for the spiritual repair – the reparation – of the harm done, *accompanied* by our earthly actions to purify our Church of this evil, to bring abusive bishops and priests to earthly justice, and to hold the Pope and bishops accountable to make real changes in our Church to stop the sexual abuse of minors, rather than making apologies that have become meaningless.

Brothers and sisters, let us begin by acknowledging our *own* sins, and so prepare ourselves to offer this Mass in Reparation for the Sins of Bishops and Priests Against Minors.