

One Precious Blood person reflects on the sexual abuse scandal

As I write this reflection, it has been about two weeks since the news broke about the Grand Jury report revealing the sexual abuses in Pennsylvania by clergy. Since I first heard about this revelation, I think I have gone in and out of the five stages of death and dying: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

My initial reaction was like hearing about my first cousin being arrested for drunk driving; which was bad enough; but while he was drunk he hit another car head-on and killed a mother and child. This is my first cousin! It's terrible, it's embarrassing. I feel ashamed for him and for myself. I feel terrible for the mother. I feel terrible for the family who lost a mother and child.

This is my first cousin! We share the same uncle. I don't see him every day, but we get together for family reunions. We used to play softball together. Now he's arrested and put into jail; a murderer! I didn't even know he was an alcoholic. He didn't ever abuse alcohol when I was around.

These are my cousins in Pennsylvania. I identify with my fellow priests and my heart goes out to them. All the newspapers are against my cousin for the awful crime that he committed. But they are against me, too, because I'm a member of the same family.

Jesus and I suffer together. He bears the pain with me. I have often stayed with him in his pain during his passion. Now he stays with me in my pain. When he is with me like this I can do anything. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross writes that the one thing that usually persists through all the stages of death and dying is hope.

I still feel numb with disbelief, with disappointment, with shame. There is so much good that the Catholic Church has done and is doing, but that is all being forgotten because of the sins of a few. Those sins seem to be driving many away from the Church. And I don't honestly know what to say.

This negative judgment by so many people is a cross that I must bear; it throws a dark cloud or a heavy, wet blanket over any good ministry that I am trying to do. I bring my cross to the cross of Jesus. And he somehow blends his cross with mine. I share a little portion of his rejection, his being called negative names, his being cursed. Jesus accepted his Passion without raising his voice, without cursing his oppressors. Can I do the same? Can I pray "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing"?

How do I as a Precious Blood person bring myself to Jesus and allow his healing blood to flow over my brokenness and over the brokenness of our Church? I bring my anger, disappointment, embarrassment, etc. to Jesus during the Eucharist.

At one point during the Mass the priest pours water, symbolizing our humanity, into the wine, symbolizing the divinity of Christ. The two quickly become blended as one. The prayer that accompanies this action asks that the divinity of Christ permeate our broken

humanity. Jesus not only accepts my brokenness, but transforms the experience with his divine presence.

A few days ago, I was praying on the porch outside my house, listening to the drip of the rain coming from the downspout – drip, drip, drip, drip. As I listened, I reflected on how a constant drip of water can bore a hole even into a rock.

In a parallel way, the Holy Spirit constantly dripping onto my mind and heart can soften my heart from stony, rock-like ground into soft, fertile soil that can grow wonderful, life-giving fruit and vegetables. And my mind can be softened from hard, judgmental attitudes and pharisaical thoughts into a mind of love that sees and looks for goodness in other people.

I am inviting the outpouring of that Holy Spirit these days. Jesus says “I can bring beauty out of the ashes of lost dreams.”

We are redeemed in the blood of Christ. We are washed in love. Sent by the blood, stained by the blood, we are servants of the blood of Christ.

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