

It seems like every time you look at the news lately the Catholic Church that we know and love is taking another one on the chin. First up are the seemingly relentless sex scandals, Deacons, Priests, Bishops and even Cardinals. Men who we trust with the deepest, darkest secrets of our lives, of our hearts; men who we have been raised to trust implicitly betraying that trust out of perversion, lust and their own quest for power. Each new revelation another shock until we feel we can't be shocked any more, until the next revelation and it happens again.

Then there are the politicians who claim to be Catholic, who think that by their own power and position that they can change the teachings of the Church to fit their political goals. Look at the Reproductive Health Act, or better stated, the legalization of infanticide law in New York. Governor Andrew Cuomo and the legislature celebrating its passage with glee and later on the Governor trying to defend himself by saying that he doesn't legislate religion.

The Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, in addition to her egregious stand on abortion and euthanasia, tried to remove the words "so help me God" from the oath used to testify before Congress and replace it with "under penalty of law". Doesn't seem like a big deal, but in fact it is a huge deal. We swear an oath by someone who is greater than we are, and the only one greater than a child of God is Our Father, God himself. God swears an oath in his own name, starting with Abraham (Gn 22:16) because there is no one greater than God. We invoke God's holy name in an oath because there is no one greater than he. When we swear by "under penalty of law" we make the law, and those who write it our gods, with a small, insignificant, tiny, little g.

Here is the problem statement. We face a faction in our society, some of them claiming the Catholic Faith who wish to justify their actions by making the law, government, their god and using that set of mental gymnastics to justify sacrificing the most innocent among us on the altar of their new god because the laws they have written say it is acceptable behavior. To exacerbate the situation, because of the grievous sins of some of our Church's leadership, there are those who argue that we as Catholics do not have the moral authority to do anything about these issues. Then they use the example of the politicians to say that they are the real Catholics because they are conforming to society so why don't we just go along with them?

Quite the mess isn't it? On the surface it looks like we are out numbered, out gunned and are falling fast. Of course, when Isaiah was called in to become a prophet in our Old Testament reading today; Israel was beset by two different kingdoms and their armies who were invading their land. One of those armies

was at the walls of Jerusalem. Jesus was seen as just a poor wandering rabbi when he encounters Peter, James and John in today's Gospel. The fledgling Church seemed to be on the run when Saul gathered the cloaks of the men who stoned Deacon Steven to death.

Isaiah goes on to become one of the great Old Testament Prophets. Peter becomes the head of the Church, James and John become part of the inner circle of the Apostles. James is the first Apostle to be martyred and John stands at the foot of the Cross and receives the privilege of taking Our Lady to live out her life here on earth with him. Saul gets knocked off his horse and becomes Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, our particular Apostle.

In every case, the situation either seems hopeless, or the people involved so insignificant that they would never be able to change the society in which they lived. But in fact they not only changed their society, they molded our society as well. What the Governor of New York and his ilk forget is that the Lord Our God doesn't live in a box that we make for him. We live in the boxes that he makes for us. He doesn't have any limitations except those limitations that he places on himself. We have too many limitations to count.

That is why the Catholic Church has moral authority, because it is the Church formed at the command of God, and the teaching, the moral authority flows from his grace through the Apostles down to us today. That is why Catholicism is cultural, why we integrate our faith in every aspect of our lives and in how we see the world. We acknowledge and celebrate that God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit are present in every thing we think, action we take and every word we speak. God is present in the natural world around us and in every man-made object. After all, the raw materials come from God, the skills, talents and abilities of the people who made the objects come from God, and the people themselves are children of God just like us.

Look at this candle burning on the altar. It doesn't seem to be very bright does it? That is because there are other lights in the room. Now imagine that we have this same candle in the bottom of a mine shaft. How bright is it now? Actually the candle is just as bright in both situations, it just seems to be brighter when there isn't any other light and it doesn't matter how dark it gets, the darkness cannot put out the light.

Everything we read today was about God's call to conversion. Every person who is called was and is called to Evangelize, to spread the good news. All of the calls we read about today were extraordinary. On the other hand, most of us aren't going to get knocked off of our horse.

Salvation is found in the ordinary events of everyday life. Holiness is found in the ordinary events of everyday life. Conversion and re-conversion, that is the regular renewal of our faith is found in the ordinary events of everyday life. This is how we keep the candle that is the example of our lives burning brightly, in the ordinary events of everyday life. The answers to addressing the great problems in our society are in the ordinary events of our everyday life.

Every day we need to pray at least three separate times. We need our private time with God. Then we need to pray with our spouse. Then we need to pray with our families. At least once a week we need to gather at Mass and pray with our community. If we follow this simple prescription, it will change our lives and if enough lives are changed, we can change our community and our nation.

At every Mass we are fed by the Word through the scriptures. We are fed again through the grace conferred by listening to the homily and then we are fed by the Eucharist, the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Yet, if I took a pole at the door as everyone was leaving, how many would remember what the homily was about, or the Gospel or the other readings? I have told the choir numerous times that the recessional song needs to be good because people seem to remember it longer than they remember the homily.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Let me make an analogy. Everyone in here has probably shot a few hoops with a basketball at one time or another. If you wanted to get better at the game, even if it was just 21, you had to practice. You needed to remember what you did correctly to make a basket from a given position and you had to practice it until it became automatic, in other words, you had to integrate those actions, you have to own that shot from the top of the key in order to win the game.

When we are fed at Mass, we need to take some of our prayer time to review and integrate into our lives what we have learned. You can do that with our AWAKE Group in the gathering area between the 8:30 and 11:30 AM Masses or you can do it by re-reading the scripture and discussing it with your spouse and family.

When we bring the Word into our very being, when learn to own our faith, just like we own that shot from the top of the key, we will be able to fully integrate it into the ordinary events of our everyday lives. That is when we will be comfortable using our faith as the basis for trying to change the opinions of the people we associate with every day to bring them closer to God and to our Catholic Faith. That is how we seek holiness, seek salvation, evangelize and change the world through the ordinary events of our everyday lives