

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – 07-20-2025

“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.”

Today's gospel centered around a supper. But there's another supper I'd like to turn our attention toward. I'm sure in the many homes of the families that attend our church you can find a painting of the last supper in or near the dining room.

It's an image of the night of Jesus' passion when he offered his Body and Blood and instituted the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

But we must never forget that in that painting is Judas Iscariot, who would literally sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver and 11 other disciples, Jesus' most intimate friends, who would, for the most part, abandon him within a few hours.

The following day Jesus was mocked, beaten and condemned to death. As He hung upon the cross only a few remained – the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint John and a couple other women.

Everyone else, with the exception of his enemies, had fled. This is the Church, this is part of her history and it didn't end there – it was only the beginning.

In Bishop Barron's book, Letter to a Suffering Church, he wrote, “John Henry Newman, one of the most perceptive theological

minds in the tradition, made this rather startling and sweeping observation: 'The whole course of Christianity...is but one series of troubles and disorders. Every century is like every other, and to those who live in it seems worse than all times before it. The Church is ever ailing...Religion seems ever expiring, schisms dominate, the light of truth dim, its adherents scattered. The cause of Christ is ever in its last agony.'

It fits perfectly into what Saint Paul wrote in the second reading today. "In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church."

Where the head – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – has gone, namely to his agony and passion, so to the body – His Church, you and I – must follow.

The suffering of each generation may vary considerably but no one is exempt. Today we have our own suffering to endure.

Bishop Barron continues, "And lest we think that the corruption of priests and bishops is unique to our time, we should recall one of the wittiest rejoinders in Church history. The Emperor Napoleon is said to have confronted Cardinal Consalvi, the secretary of state to Pope Pius VII, saying that he, Napoleon, would destroy the Church – to which the Cardinal deftly responded, 'Oh, my little man, you think you're going to succeed in accomplishing what centuries of priests and bishops have tried and failed to do?'"

Finally, Bishop Barron quotes the early twentieth-century Catholic writer Hilaire Belloc, who was commenting on the moral and intellectual quality of the Church's leadership in his time. He wrote, "The Catholic Church is an institution I am bound to hold divine – but for unbelievers a proof of its divinity might be found in the fact that no merely human institution conducted with such knavish imbecility would have lasted a fortnight.

Now I'm not suggesting that every priest and bishop is inept and that just because there have always been problems in the Church we should just ignore them.

On the contrary, we need to do everything we can to make things better.

But we can't just focus on the bad. Too many people already judge the Church according to Judas. But Judas is not the head and founder of the Church – Jesus Christ is!

So today, if you can, take a minute and look at that painting of the Last Supper.

But don't focus on Judas who betrayed Christ or even the other eleven apostles who fled.

Instead choose the better part follow Mary's lead from the gospel today and turn all your attention to the one in the center – Jesus Christ – because there is need of only one thing, one person – Jesus Christ.