

Homily 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Composed by Fr. John Riccardo, Pastor
Our Lady of Good Council Church
Plymouth, Michigan

*“Many of his disciples when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying who can listen to it”?
And after this, many of his disciples drew back and no longer walked with him, and Jesus said
to the twelve, will you also go away?”*

Even though this is not the Gospel that we just heard proclaimed, it’s the Gospel that’s been on my mind in a particular way since the Supreme Court decision.

There is the temptation in me and perhaps in some of you, and I’m sure in a lot of preachers across the country today, to react to what it is that was pronounced [last Friday] by the Supreme Court, but reactions are dangerous. Reactions are kind of like when you go to the doctor and he hits your knee and your foot flies out.

What is called for it seems to me instead, is a response, and a response that the Lord is encouraging me to focus on, is one word which I propose might be worth all of us focusing on and not just today and the days of this week, but in the weeks and months and perhaps even in fact the years that are to come, and that one word that the Lord is encouraging me to focus on is the word “identity”.

The Gospel tells us of a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for 12 years, she exhausted all of her savings and had only gotten worse, it seems to me like that now we are living in a world which is hemorrhaging. And just like she could only be cured by Jesus, just as the only remedy for her affliction was Jesus.

The only remedy for our world, not just with the confusion that we experience with regards to marriage and sexuality but with life, is Jesus. The Gospel also tell us of what looks like a hopeless situation. A little girl who was first sick and then dead. And so we live right

now in our country in a time which many are saying that the church is either dead or she's at least on life support.

It might be worth remembering that countless time in history of the Church, she has been pronounced dead by lots of different people and lots of different regimes... but what God does best is raise the dead to life.

And that is worth holding on to today. Before you and I can go out, as important as it is for you and I to go out, and to propose to this world in which we live, to our community, that Jesus is **the** answer not an answer, that He is **the** way not a way, that He is **the** truth not a truth, that He is **the** light, as important as it is to tell them that, today, may be an opportunity that it's more important to be sure that we are convinced of that ourselves.

Who are we? What's my identity? What's yours? Are we disciples of Jesus or not? Are we fans or are we followers? Do we happen to believe a few Christian things? Or do we really believe Jesus? Have we for real put him first? Are we really convinced that the Gospel is more and not less? That it is a better way to live?

Times are going to get hard for those who are disciples of Jesus. Times are going to get hard for those who are followers. Times are going to get hard for those who really put him first. We are going to suffer in lots of ways. We are going to be called names, bigots, hatemongers, on the wrong side of history.

We are going to learn in this country, I think perhaps for the first time, that there is a cost to discipleship. That the cross is real and that it's heavy. The temptation in the days ahead is going to be cowardice. We are probably going to get smaller.

But we don't hate. We love. We love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. And we love our neighbor as we love ourselves. And because we love our neighbor, we preach the Gospel, in its entirety, in season and out of season, welcome or unwelcome,

convenient or inconvenient. What does it really mean to be Catholic? That's a question that gets asked a lot right now. Can I be a Catholic and not accept the scriptures?

Can I be a Catholic and just choose to follow some of the things that Jesus says? Can I really be Catholic and not put Him first? The best way to answer what it means to be Catholic I've always thought is well what is it we ask of someone who wants to become Catholic an adult wants to come into full Communion of the Church, who has already been baptized but not baptized a Catholic, and they wish to come into full Communion.

What we ask of them, is that they are able to say out loud with integrity these words, "I believe and profess all that the Catholic Church, believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God" That is what it means to be Catholic. Many of his disciples when they heard this said: "This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?"

At the time when Jesus is talking the topic happens to be the Eucharist, but it could have been any other topic. It could have been marriage and sexuality, could have been having to forgive those who have hurt us, or any of the hard sayings in the Gospel that we hear.

And as a result of his teaching, the scriptures tell us, that many of his disciples drew back and no longer walked with him, and as they walked away, Jesus turned to the apostles and said "what about you, are you going to leave also?" And Peter speaks up and says, "Lord, where would we go? We are convinced that you and you alone have the words of eternal life."

Which one will we be? Will we be the crowds? Or will we be Peter? Will we stay close to Jesus, always?

May God give us the courage to do so.