

St. Frances Cabrini - Lebanon, TN
Twenty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B
September 9, 2018

Is 35:4-7A

Jas 2:1-5

Mk 7:31-37

An older man had serious hearing problems for many years. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the man to hear 100%.

The old man went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, “Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again.”

The man replied, “Oh, I haven’t told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to their conversations. I’ve changed my will three times!”

A little levity before we get into a heavy topic. I struggled this week preparing for my homily. It started last week with Father Michael’s homily in that he spoke on the topic I had planned on talking about. So I wrote a different homily. I prayed on this throughout the week and discussed it with Amy and some close friends. They suggested I go a down the path I originally intended.

We still read and hear in the news of the fall out around the Pennsylvania investigation of the archbishop covering up sexual abuse by priests. It is also in the news that one state after another are having special counsels investigate abuse situations instead of relying on church officials. During these times, it can be difficult to admit we are Catholic. During these times, we must remind ourselves who we need to put our faith in.

I want to start by sharing experiences from my life. Amy and I have experienced a child who was abused and assaulted. While this was not done by a member of the clergy, the local church was not as supportive and forthright with information. We learned that our daughter eloped with the

perpetrator the day before our psychological examine for the diaconate. Several years later, I learned that the person who validated their marriage in the Catholic church was my spiritual director just weeks before my ordination. We don't mind saying there was a feeling of abandonment from the local church.

Another story to share. I just recently learned that a sister was abused by a priest back in my home town. This was many years ago, even before I had my First Communion. After being shipped out of the country to prevent arrest, he came back years later and tried to meet up with my sister again.

All these news stories can stir up emotions from the past. We must remember two very important things. One is the victims and what they experienced. Second, Who is the Church.

This whole experience had a damaging effect on my sister which she is still dealing with. We can never forget the victims or minimize it. Unless we have walked in their shoes, we will never begin to know what they went through. If you have ever sat and listened to someone experiencing something heavy like this, you notice their eyes off into space. You notice their voice is a bit different. You start to feel pain for them.

Why do I share these very depressing things with you? These events have rocked my world. They could have very easily made me question my faith and my Church. I remind myself that God did not make these things happen. God did not, nor wants them to happen.

Why are we Catholic? Why did some join the Catholic church through RCIA? Was it because of a priest? Was it because of a bishop? Was it because of a pope or saint? Those are the wrong reasons. They may have and can influence us. Let's remember, every saint is also a sinner. They are not perfect. They will let us down.

We join the Church because of the Groom. We join the Church because of he who is on the cross. He is the Church. Not me, not Father Michael, not Bishop Mark, not any pope. No saint is the church. Only Christ.

Let me go back to an earlier question. Why did I share you my stories? It was not gain pity. It was to serve as a reminder who to have our faith in. Do we still the pain? Absolutely. Do we continue with life? Absolutely. We do this with the help of friends. More importantly, we do this with by relying on the one person who can help. That is the very same person on why I am Catholic. I am Catholic, not because of any one man, who could easily let me down. I am Catholic because of the Christ. Remember during these challenging times.