

Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Jesus said, *Do not let your hearts be troubled.*

Remember the context: they were at the last supper. Jesus has just washed the feet of his disciples. Jesus himself was deeply troubled as he told them, *one of you is about to betray me.* In fact, one would hand him over, but all would deny him. Peter himself would deny the Lord three times.

You see, there was plenty of reason to have troubled hearts. Still Jesus says to them, *Do you let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me.*

What excuses have you fabricated to explain your troubled hearts today? Is it the letter that was read? Is it someone in your family? What nearly prevented you from coming to Mass today? Today Jesus says to you, *do not let your hearts be troubled.* In fact, there is no better place to be when you are troubled than in the presence of the Lord.

Pentecost and the growth of the Church

At Pentecost the apostles and disciples received the Holy Spirit. The tongues of fire set their hearts afire for love of the living God. They set out to proclaim Jesus Christ to the world. The Holy Spirit brought to life what Jesus asked of them, *to have faith in him.* With the courage of this faith, the Acts of the Apostles reports, *the number of the disciples continued to grow!* Faith was fruitful.

We live in Pentecost! So much so that on Thursday last week the opening prayer for Mass said, *O God, who restore human nature to yet a greater dignity than at its beginning...* That's bold. We believe what we pray. We are to believe that our nature, restored by Jesus, has a greater dignity than God gave to Adam and Eve before the fall. What do we do with the gifts of the Holy Spirit? What do we do with our great dignity?

Sin and the decline of the church

We want to live in the Spirit. But...we know that we can neglect the faith and we can become apathetic. We sin. Sins cause scandal. *Scandal is an action or event regarded as morally or legally wrong and caused public outrage!* Public outrage at us or at someone in the Church is hard on faith, especially the faith of those who are young or fragile. Then the Church loses members, the Holy Spirit is saddened and the community suffers from the lack of spiritual gifts that God intends for us.

The Church is human and divine

It is good to remember that the Church is divine and human. The divinity of the Church shines in the Sacred Scriptures, in the deposit of faith and in the sacraments. The divine Church has access to the abyss of God's love and mercy for us. The Church divine recalls our great dignity when it calls us the Bride of Christ.

The Church is divine and human. God has made a great act of faith in us by *entrusting the Church to us.* We are human, we are vulnerable to weakness and sin. In as much as the Church is divine, it is perfect. In as much as it is human, it is imperfect. Some days the imperfections show more clearly than the

divinity. Some days these imperfections embarrass us and cause us even to doubt our convictions and commitments. Let us remember who God made us to be.

Human Dignity

Our dignity—human dignity—comes not from our own efforts, but from God himself. Sin can diminish someone's standing in the public eye, especially when the sins of a person become public. We need to be careful here—because not even sin obliterates human dignity. We don't make dignity and we don't lose it—it is a gift from God. A criminal on death row in Arkansas is a person with human dignity. So are sinners and criminals closer to home.

Effectiveness of the Sacraments

What if the sins come from the heart of the Church, from her very priests and leaders? It is good to note that the effectiveness of a Sacrament does not depend on the virtue of the minister. My personal sin does not invalidate the Eucharist or the forgiveness you receive in the Sacrament of Penance. The effectiveness of the sacraments depends on the dispositions of the recipient! If you are in the state of grace, you live more fruitfully the Sacrament of Marriage. If we are in the state of grace, the grace of Baptism and Confirmation are more effective in us. If we are in the state of grace, we are more open to the nourishment of the Eucharist

The bishop has provided a press release and a statement to be read at Mass today. Rather than read it to you I have made copies available (Frazee—on the table by the confessional, Callaway—on the table of the Holy Family)

I covered many topics today. We need to end with Mother's Day.

- Do you let your hearts be troubled...Mothers labor to untrouble the hearts of their children, and the troubled hearts of their children become the unrest in their own hearts. For all the times our mothers have soothed our troubled hearts, let us give God thanks. For all the times we refused to accept comfort and wisdom from our mothers, let us ask God for pardon.
- With the proclamation of the gospel, the Church continued to grow. When a woman is open to life, the Church receives a new member! For our mothers' openness to life and for the gift of life, let us give God thanks. For the times we have failed in gratitude to God and to our mothers, let us ask God for pardon.
- Mother Church is human and divine. Our mothers are perfect and imperfect. For the virtuous lives of our mothers, let us give God praise. For the weaknesses and failures of our mothers, let us pray for their healing.
- God has given us the gift of human dignity. A mother's love for her child is deep and abiding. Day in and day out, a mother believes in the dignity of her child—a child does not earn this dignity and a child never loses it. For our mothers who believe in us, let us give God praise.
- We will have a blessing for mothers in a few moments.