



Let us not abandon Jesus because of Judas

Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.’ Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.’ He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot, for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him” (Jn 6:67-71).

The recent horrific discoveries of the unmarked graves (children’s remains) on the sites of the former Residential Schools in Kamloops and Saskatchewan have once again opened up the wounds and the pains of the Indigenous People of Canada. Right now, people in general are mostly angry with the Church for the part she played in the Residential Schools. We are taken aback, questioning whose fault it is - is it the fault of the Government in establishing the Residential Schools and implementing the policies or is it the fault of the Church for cooperating to manage the schools. Personally, I have very basic knowledge about the origin and purpose of the Residential Schools in Canada. But what I know for sure is that the evil that has happened in the past is unacceptable and shows that we as Humans and as Christians have failed to live like the creatures created in the image and likeness of God’s Son. Even though individually we may not have been directly involved with what happened, nevertheless, it has brought a bad name for the Church as a universal religious institution. The entire universal Church is blamed for it and that is understandable as we call ourselves one holy Catholic Church. So, any good or evil carried out by the members of the Church affects the universal Church to varying degrees; and this good or evil also has the potential to either build our life or break it all together. God has created us good and in return only expects good from us. God always does good things for us to grow whereas the devil always does evil things to destroy us and to take us away from God.

At this troubled time, I would like to remind ourselves; who is the Church? Each individual is. Who has called you to be a member of the Church? It is Jesus who has called and chosen you to be a member of His Body, the Church. We may come across people who are indignant against the Church as an institution, or are angry with how situations have been handled in the past, or even those who are ashamed or not at ease of practicing and associating with the Christian or Catholic faith anymore, who are thinking of leaving the Church and joining some other groups and threatening vandalism, etc.; but whatever is going on in the Church and in our world, "Let us not abandon Jesus because of Judas." It's not fair or even sensible on our part to abandon Jesus because some act like Judas in our world and in our Church, betraying Him and committing sins against humanity. Jesus says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit-fruit that will last-and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you" (Jn 15:16). We may have failed to live up to our calling and to bear fruits, yet Jesus loves us as we are but rebukes us for our sins. Jesus never abandons us even though we sin. He wants us to repent and journey with Him to be the best sons and daughters of His Father. He wants us to follow the **WAY**, the **TRUTH** and the **LIFE** that He preached and lived on earth so that this world will be a better place for all to live. It's time to turn the shame that we are going through to being instead a witness of the Real Church (we are) in this troubled time. Do not wait for the opportune time which may never come but each and every moment is the God-given time to be the best version of ourselves that God intended us to be.

We are always concerned about our own master plan for life and are busy working hard to fulfill that plan for our own happiness on this earth, which isn't bad. It's good to have such plans in place but we also need to pause for a while and reflect, and seek out the master plan God has made for us, which is to share eternal life with Him. It's time to let Him take control of our lives, allow Him to lead and guide us to greener pastures as the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. "Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body and to His likeness according to the Spirit. And all creatures under heaven serve, know, and obey their Creator, each according to its own nature, better than you" (Admonition of St. Francis of Assisi-5). God has placed us in much greater excellence than all other creatures. Still, all creatures "serve, know and obey" the creator better than us. Considering our highest excellence, we should have been serving God more than all other creatures. But the opposite is the case. What a shame! In other words, St. Francis is shaking and waking us up with the challenging question, "why are you still late?" Better late than never. It is time to start.

Fr. Manoj Xalxo, OFM