



ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CANADA
TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN COMMUNION
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PRIMATE AND METROPOLITAN



PASTORAL LETTER

September 16, 2018

The Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity

Reverend Clergy and Beloved Brethren in Christ:

I AM sure many of you have followed in the media recently the news stories relating to the abuse scandals in the Roman Catholic Church. While the particular stories deal with pedophile priests in the United States and Germany, as well as bishops who ignored or covered for their sins, the scandal touches all Churches and all Christians. At a time when secular society is increasingly challenging Christianity, such news and such sinful behavior only prove to bolster the latent social prejudices against religion and the Church in the West.

In the East there is an ongoing jurisdictional war within the Orthodox Communion between the Patriarch of Moscow and the Patriarch of Constantinople over the status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This jurisdictional dispute is further complicated by underlying political pressures, historical grievances, and the unique place of State Churches in the overall Christian landscape. Church and State, Altar and Throne, can be a powerful mix when it comes to the hearts and souls of a nation and its people.

Here in Canada we are not immune from scandal within the Christian Church. There are the scandals of pedophile priests; the deep wounds and scars of the residential school system run by the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and United Churches; in addition to the ongoing divisions over doctrine and morals.

Of course, such sins are not exclusive to the Christian Church. Public school teachers, choir directors, scout masters, camp directors, foster parents, military officers, and political leaders have all added to the list of shame and scandal in our society.

So, what are we to make of all of this? How are we to process the seemingly endless litany of sin, scandal and shame touching the Christian Church and all aspects of our society? How are Christians to address these realities while holding on to their faith and Christian witness?

Part of the answer lies in the words of the Collect for this Sixteen Sunday After Trinity: “Lord, let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church....” At the heart of this petition lies the theological understanding of the Church. And in that theological understanding comes our resolve. As I am sure you remember from your Catechism, there are four marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. Over and above these four marks there are the two natures of the Church: Divine and Human. Unfortunately for many, both within the Church and outside, there is only one understanding of the Church – that of an institution.

It is this sole understanding of the Church as ‘human institution’ that negates the truth of the two-fold nature of the Church as the ‘mystical body of Christ’ and the ‘blessed company of all faithful people’.

The Church is divine because her Head is Divine – Jesus Christ. The Church is human because it is composed of imperfect, sinful, struggling men and women, redeemed by Christ, living out their faith within the context of their particular time and place.

Through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, God instituted and ordained the mystical union and ordered society which is His one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. It is when this mystical union and ordered society are made to become a human institution that sin, division, and disorder overrun the godly order and divine teachings of Jesus Christ. It is then that we in the Christian Church loose our moral grounding, our unique witness in the world – supplanting it with scandal and shame.

The remedy to this scandal and shame lies within the two-fold nature of the Church. With God, praying that He may look upon His Church with pity and mercy, cleansing her of all that would pervert or destroy His spotless Bride. And with the company of all faithful people, challenging each member of the Church to examine their own faith, their own witness, their own example, to see if it stands up to Christ's call to holiness. Then, most importantly, resolution requires repentance.

The sins and scandal within the Church are both a matter of personal sin and of corporate sin. When we come to the General Confession at Holy Communion, each of us should pause to confess not only our own individual sins of commission and omission, but also the corporate sins of the Church, for we are all members of the one universal Church in corporate union with Christ our Lord and Head. It is only then that we are able to pray God to pity and cleanse His Church.

Finally, let us remember that our faith is in Jesus Christ, who is Lord and Saviour. The devil will do his very best to undermine Christ's holy Church but the divine nature will always overcome the deficiencies of the human nature if we but take our part with humble and contrite hearts.

As Christians, our witness, our morality, our interaction within secular society needs to be grounded solely on our faith in Jesus Christ. As with secular society's institutions, leaders, and laws we must look to the 'better angels of our nature' and not to the sinful nature of man with its perversions and imperfections.

You and I bear in our lives the sinful nature of fallen man with feet of clay, but we bear in our souls the image of Christ, marked with the sign of the Cross at Baptism, sealed with the Holy Spirit at Confirmation, and nourished by the Precious Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. Let us stand strong in our faith and be constant in our witness.

"O Lord, we beseech thee, let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour, preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

