

Why Remain Catholic? (With So Much Scandal)

... a message from Bishop Robert Barron

Friends, in light of recent scandals, I know many are wondering whether they should remain in the Catholic Church. I totally get that; the outrage is warranted. But in this time of crisis, I beg you not to flee, but to fight - not violently, with the weapons of the world, but with the weapons of the Holy Spirit. We need you. Bishop Robert Barron, full video: https://youtu.be/-ani_hnN8Fs

I want to speak with you about the terrible crisis we're passing through in the Church right now, this crisis of sexual abuse and the countenancing of it by some Bishops. What strikes now is the number of people who seem to be calling for the abandonment of the Church: "Because of this crisis, it's time for us to leave the Church. We've simply had enough." I understand and share people's feelings of frustration and anger. I get it, but may I suggest ... this is precisely the wrong strategy at this moment in the Church's life. *Leaving* is not what we need to do. We need to be *fighting*.

One of my greatest heroes is Abraham Lincoln who operated politically in one of the most convulsive times of our national history; when slavery threatened the very foundations of American democracy. Lincoln knew from the beginning of his career that the nation "couldn't survive half-slave and half-free", as he put it, but more profoundly, he saw slavery, as an institution, was repugnant to the very principles of American democracy.

We hear this in the words of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address we memorized in high school: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." (*Notice how he articulated the very principles that define American democracy: freedom and equality.*)

"We are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether this or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure." (*Lincoln knew American democracy itself was at stake. He knew slavery was a kind of cancer to undermine our American ideals.*) At a time when it may be simple to give up on our country, Lincoln wouldn't give up. Instead, he led the country to fight for the ideals of American democracy.

Something similar is at stake today: The Catholic Church, its great ideals

and principles, grounded in Jesus Christ, the love of God made manifest in Him, in His dying and His rising. The Catholic Church, in all its power, beauty and perfection is indeed threatened by this terrible scourge of sexual abuse. It is indeed a blight on the Church, and it is appropriate that people feel anger and frustration.

... But now is not a time for leaving. Rather, what's called for is the Lincoln option: fight for the Church we believe in so powerfully. See this blight, name it clearly, unambiguously, and then fight to set things right. This is not the moment to cut and run. This is the moment to get in there and fight.

How do we fight? Through your own righteous anger; by writing a letter to your Bishop, to the Pope. You fight by your very presence at Mass. You fight by keeping people's feet to the fire, by organizing your fellow Catholics. Fight any way you can, but fight you must because you believe in the Church, you love the Church, and you realize that despite this terrible blight, it's worth fighting for.

... We are not Catholic because of the moral excellence of our leaders. We expect them to be morally excellent, but we are not Catholics because of someone else's moral excellence. We are Catholic because of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead. We are Catholic because of the Trinitarian love of God. We are Catholics because of the Mystical Body of Christ. We are Catholics because of the Sacraments. We are Catholics especially because of the Eucharist. We are Catholic because of the Blessed Mother, because of the Saints. Even as leaders in the Church morally fail, the Catholic Church itself remains the Mystical Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ. And She is worth fighting for.



Every baptized person is priest, prophet and king. In the Old Testament we read of Israel - a community meant to be the chosen people, reflecting the will of God. But their leaders often failed, the people fell into sin, fell away from the Torah and the temple. And what did God do? He called forth prophets: people like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Amos, Ezekiel, Zechariah. They often raised their voices in angry protest about these corruptions. But they did not cut and run when Israel was in trouble. The Prophets spoke out.

Now YOU are the prophet. All who are baptized into Jesus Christ is a prophet. Raise your voice! It's the responsibility of all who bear the prophetic charism.

... Who are we fighting for? Primarily, we are not fighting to save institutions. As Cardinal George said in his last talk to the Priests of Chicago: "Remember, at the beginning of the Church, there were no parishes, schools, hospitals or institutions. There were evangelists; there were proclaimers of the Word." His point was, ultimately, the Church does not depend on institutions.

We are not fighting for that aspect of the Church's life, we are fighting for the victims of these terrible crimes, for people who were sexually assaulted and abused. If we cut and run now, who will be the prophetic voice on behalf of these victims?

This is my *cri de coeur* - my cry from the heart. I get the frustration of the people. *I share it*. But this is not a time to abandon the Church. This is a time to fight for the Church.

May God bless you all.

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on FIRE