

***Twenty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time
Tenth Sunday After Pentecost (Latin Mass)
September 7, 2025
Year of the Holy Spirit***

*“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”
(Luke 14:27)*

“Jesus, master, have mercy on us” (Luke 17:13)

I find the Gospel of Saint Luke, which is proclaimed in both our English and Latin Masses this weekend, quite appropriate for the subject matter I will reflect upon. Beginning in early 2002 with the Boston Globe’s reporting on the scandalous behavior of priests, the Catholic Church, in these United States, has increasingly tried to make the protection of children central to her mission. One may debate how successful Dioceses have been in this necessary mandate from the laity. Families want to know, when they send their children to an institution operated by the Catholic Church, their children are safe. Likewise, parishes have tried as well to provide safe environments for these children to grow and develop within. As we prepare for our own move, one of the many thoughts that is central to our new building is: “How can we keep our children safe?” Despite all of the necessary precautions we will implement, I ask, how can anyone person, family or church protect our children from the current evil we now witness?

In the days following the tragedy which occurred at Annunciation Parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I found myself turning again to God asking my one-word question— “Why?” God, in Your Divine Providence, why do You permit so much evil in our world? I shudder to think, if we made a list of those things we call evil, how long that list would be? As I now so often find myself doing, I turned to those great Christians, who have gone before us, to provide an answer to my question. An answer, maybe not THE ANSWER, to my question, was found in an old book entitled A Manual of the Catholic Religion for Catechists, Teachers and Self-Instruction. The Manual was written by Rev. Father F.X. Weninger, D.D. a member of the religious community Missionary of the Society of Jesus. This current edition was reprinted in 1861. I would like to offer, for our reflection, the two-part answer which was given for my question. I now present his answer:

“In order that the sinner may know the justice of God and be converted; and the virtuous may have opportunity of practising the most sublime and meritorious virtues, especially by an entire abandonment of themselves to the will of God, who ordains and permits such trials.” (p.38)

Approaching the first part of this answer, we must acknowledge this reality, we are those sinners being addressed. As the Catholic Church teaches, a point we have often stressed, we are members of the Body of Christ and what happens in one part of the Body

affects the whole Body. The actions, be they sinful or virtuous, practiced by one member DOES affect all members. We are experiencing this reality in this current moment. Father Weninger, the author of our Manual, lived from 1805 to 1888. We are, this day, reflecting upon an answer he wrote about during his lifetime. Do we think he was the first to seek out an answer? No! He would turn to those who preceded him for assistance. In much the same way, the sins of others, alive now or prior to us, affect us. And, our sins have the potential to affect those who will come after us. The most tried and true antidote to this sickness of evil affecting the Body of Christ, will always be our continued conversion. If I want less evil in the world, then I must begin by not contributing to or cooperating with evil, both intelligent being and concept.

Concerning the second part of this answer, I humbly admit, this is difficult. It asks the person affected to accept this trial as coming from the Hand of God and act in such a way as to virtuously merit grace by abandoning themselves to His Will which permitted the action which has affected them. I confess—IF, God forbid, we should undergo such a trial as Annunciation Parish, I would struggle to offer this answer to one grieving. It is a sound reasoned answer. God, who created all in His Image and Likeness, grants to all the freedom of will. We can choose what we want even if the thing we want is contradictory to God's Will. We are not slaves to God. We are His Children. And, as His Child, each one MUST accept everything which falls from His Hand. Does that necessarily mean we must tolerate evil? No! We must actively purge evil from ourselves and guide others to do so. Furthermore, we cannot accept a society which tolerates, approves or promotes things contrary to God's Will. We are called to change the society around us, not allowing it to change us. It is in our acceptance of those things God permits, where we eventually find consolation. God permitted me this time to spend with my loved one and even if that one is taken from me due to the evil of another, I ACCEPT. It shall not change me. I will thank God for that borrowed time we had together. I may never know why this act occurred or even understand how one could commit such an evil action, but I can grow in holiness through this experience and one day, when I meet Him, understand how and why this event occurred. In essence, our acceptance of this one action, may be the deciding event which allows us to recommit to a Christian life and thus, after our earthly life has run its course, experience an eternity with Him in complete, perfect, unending Love.