

## Fruit of Scandal

‘For you became sorrowful as God intended...Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done’ (2 Cor. 7: 9-11).

Like you, I strain to see good come from Church-mishandling of abuse. And I’m not sure if mandates from the top down—even decisive, far-reaching ones—will satisfy. We must pray, bearing with her exposure; we who wait expectantly will be doubly blessed when we behold beauty emerging from the broken ground. I am doubly blessed as I write this. During a trip to a state where the Church has been rocked by criminal investigations, I began to see life signs.

First, the abuse scandal has prompted a renewed commitment to healthy communion among priests. I was privileged to attend a chastity group run by a priest for priests. A handful of men have forged deep bonds through their differing vulnerabilities—same-sex attraction, porn temptations, inclinations to unchaste relations. These brave men are equally diverse in their stations in life. Some are young and newly-ordained, others at midpoint, still others retired. All led out humbly with their frailties and have forged a fraternity of mercy and accountability that is glorious, free of competition and drab shoptalk (aka grumbling). Authentic, attuned care prevailed.

I witnessed the fruit of their communion, as I had met most of them a couple years earlier. This round they were more focused, more earnest to ensure that their weaknesses become holy strengths; instead of isolating in fear, these men are learning to connect with humble courage.

Second, I had the honor of meeting Paul, the Dean of Students at a large seminary in that state. He is extraordinary—open, humble, holy. And grateful that the seminary is flourishing, with this year’s class being the largest one in twenty years. Amid the scandal, solid young men are being summoned by God to become a new standard of integrity.

Paul and his team have a lot to do with that. Among the main priorities of the seminary is cultivating a culture of transparency. Mentors are activating the students themselves to set up a variety of small groups in which peers provoke one another to holy self-giving. I asked Paul if a ‘gay-identified’ student could make it in the seminary. ‘His brothers would never let him get away with it. He would have to lose the ‘gay’ rap and get on track towards integration like everyone else.’ Awesome.

Paul continued: ‘We work especially hard to discern the emotional maturity of students, to ascertain that they are growing in their capacity to form healthy relationships with both men and women. They need to wrestle with what it means to make a fruitful commitment to celibacy. That may mean taking a break from the seminary in order to figure out what they really want. Seminary should be a place where people come and go. We pray that some will return, better able to say

'yes' to God in a healthy, fruitful way that will endure.'

What Paul emphasized was that seminary is not just about individuals discerning a lifetime commitment to the Church but also the Church discerning a lifetime commitment to them.

For the first time, I witnessed the fruit of scandal. From the fire of abuse, a repentant Church is emerging. She is at once sorrowful for her sin and zealous to glorify Jesus, each member doing its part to become one chaste bride.

Please take time to watch our new video and become '[Chaste Together](#).'