

The Word of the Lord?

4 April 2010 | By Paul | paul@mindparts.org

On Good Friday, the Catholic Church, through the pope's personal preacher, compared the current scrutiny of both the pope and the church to the historical suffering of Jews. Rev. Raniero Cantalamessa said, "They know from experience what it means to be victims of collective violence and also because of this they are quick to recognize the recurring symptoms." To make matters worse, these words were spoken during the homily of the Good Friday service in St. Peter's Basilica, while the pope looked on.

I can understand that the church feels under siege. It is and should. Everything that is happening now is a direct result of the church's own doing, and as I have said before, none of this is surprising when seen in its proper historical context. The responses are typical, and sad—that facts are being misrepresented and that the church itself is the victim.

These statements, from which the Vatican has since backtracked, are merely a public admission of what is the predominantly held belief of the church hierarchy. A belief that is the foundation of all that is wrong with the church. A core belief that has put so many children in danger for so many years. A core belief that has led to the suicides of so many clergy abuse victims. A core belief that has been a true obstacle to healing of physical, emotional and spiritual wounds of untold thousands.

What do such statements say to those who were sexually abused by deviant clergy and whose abuses were covered up for decades? I will tell you what I heard and felt: That we survivors are *demons*. That we survivors mean *nothing*. That we survivors merely incite *violence*.

The irony of these statements by the church is that in reality they do not apply to church suffering at all, but to the suffering of *victims of clergy abuse*. In fact, this is a parallel I made in [Jews](#).

Whenever I think there is hope that the message I heard loud and clear as a child and teenager and adult is now different, I am given a dose of reality that it is not. These statements have served, in my mind, to nullify any prior or future statements of

empathy or support for the abuses and cover-ups that have occurred. The Catholic Church does not have the right to say one thing one week, do nothing at all in its deeds at the highest of levels, and then say something so appalling and unholy the next week on one of the holiest days of the year—and expect to retain any shred of credibility.

I am certain Jesus does not at all approve of what the church has become, supposedly built around his life and teachings. If Jesus were giving the Good Friday homily, I would suspect he might repeat Matthew 21:13 in which he said: "*My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.*"

On Good Friday, the hours of 12 noon and three are known as the *Three Hours' Agony*, representing the last three hours before Jesus died on the cross. Tradition holds that these hours are for specific prayers and acts of reparation for Jesus' suffering; acts meant to repair the sins against Jesus. For me, this year, I spent these hours in a psychiatric hospital, tortured by internal conflicts about religion, God, Jesus, and Satan. When I read these statements spoken on Good Friday, precisely in the middle of these three special hours, I could not help but have the immediate reaction that I should die. It was then not easy to stay safe, and eventually I found myself sleeping in a hospital Quiet Room.

But I fought.

A couple days removed, I have gained some perspective.

In Galatians, Jesus said that we are all sons of God. My interpretation is that these acts of reparation are meant to acknowledge all of God's children who have suffered in the name of religion.

Instead, in St. Peter's Basilica, *we* are not reached out to; only the church is the victim.

Unfortunately, this leads me to conclude that the words of the Catholic Church are clearly *not* the Words of the Lord.

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