

Reflection on Amos 1:1-2:3 and the beginning of a letter attributed to Barnabas

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This passage evokes the image of a violent unloving god who vents his wrath on the world. It is an image that I do not like to think about and have had trouble equating with the loving Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Despite my dismay at this writing, I remember that God is the creator of the forces that make our universe what it is. Black holes, exploding novae, suns millions of times larger than our sun, quasars and the magnificent beauty of the night sky tell the story that God is not a soft warm fuzzy. He is the creator of all and we should all be just a bit less blasé about judging Him and our relationship to Him.

The line that has stayed most in my mind is, "Because they ripped open expectant mothers in Gilead, while extending their territory." It is this line that makes me shudder when I realize what it may mean for our country and her future in this culture of abortion.

My thoughts also turn to the recent news reports of sexual scandals within our own Church and wonder how God is going to judge the Church and us as a people.

I wish there was an easy one liner to give to people who, because of the recent scandalous news, are climbing on the "I hate the Catholic Church bandwagon." But, there are no one-liners.

For awhile, my husband and I were foster parents of abused children. The experiences of working with these children, their families and the experience of dealing with competent and incompetent county and state social services workers and psychologists has left me with an array of mixed emotions and thoughts on the subject. But most of all it left me with the knowledge that the abuse of children and other sexual scandals are not problems that belong solely to the Catholic Church. I am grateful that the microscope is focused on the Church and I hope that it continues to be so. With the Grace of God, our Church will be purged of this shame. It will be purged of shame because the light of truth burns away the evil. This wonderful Church and Her message to the vulnerable, the unborn children, and to abused boys and girls, and the seduction of young men and young women, will not mean a thing if she is not cleansed from the evil of exploiting the vulnerable.

The Second Reading from the letter from Barnabas quoted a passage from Isaiah 1:11-15. Isaiah 1:16-20 gives hope and a warning for our Church and for all of us.

Wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
stop doing wrong.

¹⁷ Learn to do right; seek justice.

Defend the oppressed.^[a]

Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.

¹⁸ "Come now, let us settle the matter,"
says the LORD.

"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the land;

²⁰ but if you resist and rebel,

you will be devoured by the sword.”
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.