

Fr Michael
January 24, 2016

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 Neh 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly,
which consisted of men, women,
and those children old enough to understand.
Standing at one end of the open place that was before the Water Gate,
he read out of the book from daybreak till midday,
in the presence of the men, the women,
and those children old enough to understand;
and all the people listened attentively to the book of the law.
Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform
that had been made for the occasion.
He opened the scroll
so that all the people might see it
— for he was standing higher up than any of the people —;
and, as he opened it, all the people rose.
Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God,
and all the people, their hands raised high, answered,
“Amen, amen!”
Then they bowed down and prostrated themselves before the LORD,
their faces to the ground.
Ezra read plainly from the book of the law of God,
interpreting it so that all could understand what was read.
Then Nehemiah, that is, His Excellency, and Ezra the priest-scribe
and the Levites who were instructing the people
said to all the people:
“Today is holy to the LORD your God.
Do not be sad, and do not weep” —
for all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law.
He said further: “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks,

and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared;
for today is holy to our LORD.
Do not be saddened this day,
for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!”

Reading 2 1 Cor 12:12-30

Brothers and sisters:

As a body is one though it has many parts,
and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body,
so also Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,
whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons,
and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Now the body is not a single part, but many.

If a foot should say,

“Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,
“it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.

Or if an ear should say,

“Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body, “
it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?

If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God placed the parts,

each one of them, in the body as he intended.

If they were all one part, where would the body be?

But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you, “
nor again the head to the feet, “I do not need you.”

Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker
are all the more necessary,

and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable

we surround with greater honor,

and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety,

whereas our more presentable parts do not need this.
But God has so constructed the body
as to give greater honor to a part that is without it,
so that there may be no division in the body,
but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.
If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it;
if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.
Some people God has designated in the church
to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers;
then, mighty deeds;
then gifts of healing, assistance, administration,
and varieties of tongues.
Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?
Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing?
Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

Gospel Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events
that have been fulfilled among us,
just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning
and ministers of the word have handed them down to us,
I too have decided,
after investigating everything accurately anew,
to write it down in an orderly sequence for you,
most excellent Theophilus,
so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings
you have received.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,
and news of him spread throughout the whole region.
He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up,
and went according to his custom
into the synagogue on the sabbath day.
He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.
He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.
Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down,
and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.
He said to them,
“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

.....

In today's Gospel

we hear Jesus' first words spoken in his public ministry.

And they are the words of the Prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to bring glad tidings to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

Jesus read the Hebrew scroll well,

all eyes were upon him as he went back to his seat and sat down.

We'd think that all would be well based on how this story ends today.

But just a few moments later,

his fellow citizens of Nazareth would try to kill him,

and you might feel like doing that to me after this homily.

The poor, the oppressed, the captives, the blind...

these are the people whom the Messiah, Jesus would come to save.

The upstanding people of Israel and Nazareth were not these;

they would reject Jesus and those who followed Him.

That is why

the Church really does have a preferential option for the poor,

the oppressed, the captives, the blind,

and of these especially

innocent children in the womb waiting for birth.

The Church diligently exercised this preferential option for the poor

back in the 1960's & 1970's.

Back then it seemed easier to tell the good guys from the bad guys;

the moral confrontations of the time were clearer
and youth in particular, us baby boomers,
took the idealistic and moral high ground:

- Integration vs segregation
- equality vs inequality
- acceptance vs exclusion
- war vs peace
- love versus hate
- good versus evil

We must NEVER underestimate the power of evil.

Evil never gives up and is not easily defeated,
and the essence of evil is the power of death.

Evil will always strike at our weakest point.

So seeing it was on the verge of moral defeat in so many areas,
evil struck back at humanity's preoccupation with ... SEX
Artificial birth control became an issue of the times,
a right falsely attached to the movement for equal rights for women.
Only the church spoke out against it.

I remember talking about this to a girlfriend of mine in 1969;
she was the only girl in a family of 8 children.

They lived in a small house; the boys must've been 3 or 4 to a room.

They were not rich but hard working and comfortable middle class.

Sherrie, a year younger than I at age 18, was defending birth control.

I said to her ...look at your family....

"Which one of your brothers would you really wish were not here ?"

It is unlikely her parents planned to have all those children.

I look at myself, born when my mother was 39.

Surely I wasn't planned.

In hers and my parent's generation,

people planned to care for the children God gave them.

Well, artificial birth control took hold in people's minds and practice
and we will never know the human potential
and progress we've prevented
by our seizing artificial control of this vital natural process.
Evil was subtle, very clever to attack this private thought and practice.
Artificial birth control was not ugly and public like racism,
not barbarous like war.

In the 1930's Mahatma Gandhi prophesied
that the universal use of contraceptives would be "racial suicide,"
not physical death, but—something worse—
the moral death of refusing to face the consequences
of self-indulgent actions.

The way people think, determines how they live.

The way we live today, very few people can afford large families.
I know birth control is a complicated and sensitive issue,
and that it is not always used self indulgently to avoid responsibility,
but it is always used to prevent life.
Its acceptance has had terrible consequences,
as foreseen by Pope Paul VI.

It really began in Western Europe.

They said, shouldn't a woman have the right of
absolute control over her body ?

What if a mother's LIFE is in danger by a pregnancy ?

Shouldn't a woman have a right to terminate a pregnancy ?

Reasonable people accustomed to the thought of birth control
said "Of course," oblivious of the child and father.

And so one by one both western democracies
and eastern totalitarian societies said yes to abortion.

A little private thought and action has morphed into murder.
85% of the abortions performed in the west today
are "for birth control."

Now from Ireland to Russia, from Iceland to Sicily,
the population of Caucasian Europeans is steadily shrinking,
as human reproduction has slid below the replacement level;
and Muslims who are having children are increasing in number.
Europeans are suddenly realizing this
and blaming the Muslims for trying to take over.

Abortion is not saving the lives of the loving mothers,
not sparing the world from psychopaths,
and we all dignify this act by calling it by the euphemism "abortion"
instead of what it is...murder.
It is killing for personal convenience.

Notice how no one wants to say that they are pro-abortion.

They are pro choice !

What reasonable person would not be for choice, right ?

Clever marketing has played to self interest

and the truth is hidden by a big lie.

Now 28% of women obtaining abortions identify themselves as Catholic.

Moreover, when you look at it clearly as a tool of national policy,
you can consider abortion in the US racist and genocidal,
targeting especially African Americans and Hispanics
with publicly financed abortions on demand, an easy way out...
sometimes mandated to qualify for welfare & ADC.

African Americans and Hispanics abortion rates per capita

and per live birth are almost 300% higher than for white women.

With this racists are winning after all.

There's no need for lynchings or KKK night riders or bombings.

They don't have to murder the likes of Dr MLK
just let him be silently killed in the womb and never be born.

As a tool of our international policy abortion can also be genocidal,

as the US and International aid agencies require
the availability and promotion of abortion for population control
as a condition for our humanitarian and economic aid,
especially in Africa and the poorest countries.
What Gandhi feared is coming true.

Consider that last image in the gospel we just heard:
After hearing that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled,
The people remained silent.
They looked intently at Jesus, but did and said nothing.

Most of the moral gains of the 1960's and 70's have been lost,
and abortion – utilitarian murder – is at the heart of the loss.
Here in the 2nd decade of the 21st century evil is sitting pretty.
And most of us remain politely silent and personally inactive,
myself included.

Different polls have produced different results,
But they all show somewhere between 50 and 60% of Catholics
support legal abortion in the U.S.

If God is not angry yet,
He must surely be grieved at the hardness of human hearts.

I'd like to make two points.

One:

The Catholic Church has been working side by side
not only with Evangelical Protestant churches,
but also with Islam & Muslim organizations
to fight abortion here and worldwide.

Abortion and infanticide were widely practiced in pre-Islamic Arabia
and those were two evils that Islam definitively ended.

Despite the aberrations of the terrorists,
Islam & Muslims fundamentally believe
in the utter sanctity of human life

and the necessity to proclaim the truth.

They also believe it is their duty to remove evil however they can-
by direct action -by word - or by prayer.

Whatever is possible.

We must not for a moment think that our national support
and advocacy of abortion was not on the minds of those men
who flew planes into the WTC and the Pentagon in 2001.

It was, very much so .

We must not for a moment think that our national support
and advocacy of abortion is not on the minds of those men
who fight for ISIS today.

Misguided as they are,
they are trying to strike a blow at what Saint John Paul II
called our culture of death.

It is also why the Muslim world and other cultures
who understand that the family is the necessary
and fundamental unit of human society
and that children are the measure of the real wealth of a society
and not of its poverty,
...it is why they do not like much of our western culture.

Point Two:

On Sunday morning, September 15, 1963,
as 26 children were walking down to the basement assembly room
of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama
a bomb exploded in the stairwell in an act of racial terrorism,
killing four little girls and injuring the others.

Why were the children targeted ?

MLK's campaign in Birmingham succeeded because of children.
Adults were legitimately and genuinely afraid;
and they were used to the system...it was how things were.
It was children and young people under age 16,
who could not legally be arrested, who were NOT afraid,

who saw how things were supposed to be,
who understood what was morally right, ...
They were the ones who put their lives on the line
and stood up to the injustice of the system.
Of course they were attacked
by dogs, firehoses, tear gas, billy clubs and by bombs...
...but they won !
You cannot defeat the truth if men and women will only proclaim it.

And here I speculate, so bear with me.
We adults are perhaps a little fatigued....
Our lives are busy and our concerns weigh on us.

We fought our battles & the battles of a generation and two ago.
Perhaps some of us have gotten used to the idea of abortion.
We all know some good people who are pro-choice.
and frankly the church's positions
on abortion and birth control can be a little embarrassing to us
esp. with the child abuse scandals.
Most of us naturally don't want to stir things up too much.
And killing of an unborn child that has no face, no personality,
no history, a person who is all potentiality and no actuality;
(the pro-choice people call them a fetus, not a baby)
the murder of a victim nobody's ever known or seen....
It's hard to muster up the proper enthusiasm and energy
for what is needed to stop it.

But we can do it.
Look what WE did for civil rights, with the war in Vietnam.
Look what the children did in Birmingham, Alabama.
If every student in every Catholic school or PSR program
marched on Washington once a year,
and if they were joined by their parents & grandparents,
the people in power would notice & listen.

Politicians would see the voters of the future.

Marketers would see the consumers of the future.

If we all showed our faces in the nation's capital and said en masse

"We're fed up and we're not going to take it any more !"

If we were joined by every righteous Muslim student and parent,

every Buddhist, every Protestant,

what a statement about life that would make.

I have a dream...that we could do that.

Here at St. Anselm's we must be grateful to our Pro life Committee

which has done so much good for the cause here in the ArchD.

... grateful to Father Ralph, & the students from Priory and St. Anselms

for marching for Life in the snow in WDC on Friday.

We should all think about going next year.

If you do not understand the fundamental importance of abortion,

if the issue doesn't move you, please study it.

Time is getting short.

There is something like the law of karma

on the natural, societal level, as Gandhi foresaw.

It's a principle of physics.

For every action, there is equal & opposite reaction.

There is also the law of unintended and unforeseen consequences.

9/11 was just a foretaste of that.

As our the U.S. intentionally kills over 1 million poor, helpless,

unborn children each year,

God will allow the mechanisms of natural law to act against us,

to defend life, unless you and I...unless we...act first.

As Jesus tells us in the Gospel of St Luke:

Much will be required of the person entrusted with much,

and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.