

092808 26th Sunday in OT Pro Life Talk 2

Are there any areas in your life that are not up for discussion? I mean, can you recognize any areas for which there is no room for discussion or compromise. In this day and age, this is a tough task. For example, if I drive at 75 miles per hour in an elementary school zone – there ought to be no discussion. I have broken a law. If one has sex outside of marriage – before marriage or in adultery, we have gone too far. This is a non-negotiable. Agreed?

Well, in today's readings – we are reminded that John the Baptist and Jesus were willing to seek reconciliation from the sinner – but neither John nor Jesus ever said that sin was okay. Sin isn't what society or we decide – sin was and is and always will be a non-negotiable.

Ahhh... you might say that back in early Jewish times, there were absolutes... non-negotiables they treated as sin. A righteous Jew couldn't utter the name of God under penalty of death. And they had over 600 laws that defined ritual cleansing and altar sacrifices and such. Those were non-negotiable. The answer to that is that Jesus came and began to teach the ways of His Kingdom and the beginning of a new covenant. This sermon is a part of the answer to the question: What are the non-negotiables for us of this day and age?

If you are a Catholic... or if you are a Catechumen who is beginning a journey to become a Catholic, please listen up. If you are a visitor who wants to know what the Catholic Church teaches... this sermon is a part of the answer. Now - this isn't about our Creed that we will say in a few moments.

This isn't about our belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist or the other Sacraments. Those are essential truths. But this is a firm and unequivocal answer to basic LIFE issues taught by our pope, our bishops... priests... the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. This is who we are as Catholics.

The first is on the topic of abortion. A month ago, I preached about this taking of innocent life from the sacred womb. There is no Pro Choice for Catholics. Period. Even if we know that under normal circumstances it takes a man and a woman to participate, all life comes from God. And the most defenseless life in the world – the life that most needs our protection is life in the womb. We can't equate an abandoned litter of puppies with the supreme importance of human life. Our main focus must be on a prayerful, peaceful, active and non-equivocal action-oriented defense of life. Those who have had an abortion can find reconciliation and forgiveness through many ministries. Talk to one of us or go to confession if you wish to start healing or discuss Project Rachel, the post abortion ministry for women.

The second non-negotiable for Catholics is the sanctity of marriage. I was involved in the defense of marriage act back in Colorado. It was fascinating to see some of the people who wouldn't sign a petition to put this on the ballot in Colorado. The ballot measure ultimately was successful. But those who wouldn't sign it had reasons like not wanting to offend others or having a family member living in a gay and loving relationship. Truth defined by being nice?

Our Arizona bishops, Kicanas from Tucson and Olmsted from Phoenix jointly co-authored a teaching commentary about this very topic. The bishops wrote: “The Catholic Church teaches an understanding of marriage as an exclusive, lifelong and loving relationship between one man and one woman. The Catholic Church holds that this understanding of marriage is a natural truth — self-evident through human reason. Neither the state nor the church can redefine or change marriage. As we approach the elections, please know that there is now a marriage ballot measure here in Arizona called Prop 102. A YES vote on Prop 102 does one thing and one thing only. It defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman in the Arizona Constitution, the highest law in our state. One man. One Woman. Prop 102. That’s Marriage. Any other position isn’t Catholic. In fact – it isn’t even Christian.

Related to marriage, may I recommend a brand new movie? It’s not a Catholic movie – but it is a good Christian movie. I think it was funded by a Baptist organization. It’s called FIREPROOF and it just opened. I believe – I truly believe it will help you and young adults to recognize Christian values in order to FIREPROOF your marriage... It’s filled with the values that most all of us hunger in our lives and marriages.

The third non-negotiable for Catholics is Euthanasia. Dear Hearts – I’ve seen my brother dieing of lung cancer with tubes and machines everywhere pumping... beeping... alarming. I’ve seen my mom barely hanging on with end-stage congestive heart failure. I know about quality of life in the worst of situations.

I also understand what it means to begin to think of ‘mercy killing.’ But euthanasia is a form of homicide. No person has a right to take his own life, and no one has the right to take the life of any innocent person. In euthanasia, the ill or elderly are killed, by action or omission, out of a misplaced sense of compassion. True compassion cannot include intentionally doing something intrinsically evil to another person.

The last two issues are Embryonic Stem Cell Research – and Cloning. It’s likely that most of us aren’t studied enough to keep up with all of the medical and moral issues surrounding these topics. But here are a few basic points.

Human embryos are human beings. Respect for the dignity of the human being excludes experimentation, manipulation or exploitation of the human embryo. Most such experimentation involves damage or destruction – the killing of embryos. Recent scientific advances have shown that often... often medical treatments that researchers hope to develop from experimentation can be developed using adult stem cells instead. Adult stem cells can be taken from me with little or no effect. The final point I want to make is – even if (A BIG IF) – benefits were to be had from embryonic research or from cloning, it would not justify destroying innocent embryonic humans or mistakes coming about from cloning research. And the Church reminds us that with regard to cloning – this can be seen as efforts to bring forth human life without benefit of marriage or human sexuality.

In just moments, you and I will recite the Creed of our faith. In this Creed, we say the words 'the Lord and Giver of Life.' Let all life be in His province... not in the control of society or scientists.

If I end this homily and you don't see the relevance of these issues to you or your life – then we have failed. You and I will go into the voting book in 30-some days. Many of us stand a chance of ending up in a nursing home or hospice. God forbid – but we may be hooked up to machines some day. Your pre-need wishes should indicate that life is in God's hands. We must honor this gift of life until God says 'enough.'

Finally – may I put in a plug for the Life Chain? Life Chain is a pro-life peaceful demonstration down on the Beeline Highway next Sunday, October 5th from 2:30 till 3:30 pm. Meet at Beeline and Main. We'll have signs and it is one hour with Christians of many Churches – people coming together to demonstrate in favor of life from God. Please join us – families and young people... older folks. Life Chain – next Sunday, Oct. 5th -- 2:30 till 3:30pm on Beeline Hwy at Main St. Thank you all.

Reading 1
Ez 18:25-28

Thus says the LORD: You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!" Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair? When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die. But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, he does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Responsorial Psalm
Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14

R. (6a) Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD, and your love are from of old. The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not; in your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Reading II
Phil 2:1-11 or 2:1-5

Brothers and sisters: If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others.

Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God

something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

or

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Gospel

Mt 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' He said in reply, 'I will not, ' but afterwards changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir, 'but did not go. Which of the two did his father's will?"

They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him."