

Homily Rerun: October 16, 2016 ~ Fr. Bill



Today, we celebrate the Respect of Life Sunday. God is love; love and life go together. So we affirm that there is hope for everyone. The Church does not teach that anyone who has killed through any means is destined for hell. Rather Christ's message is, "I tell you... unless you repent you will ... perish" (Luke 13:3, 5).

As Pope Francis said in calling for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, "We are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us". Cardinal Dolan said: "When we let our hearts be moved by God's mercy, it shapes everything." The Cardinal called for all human life to be 'cherished and protected.' He further, emphasized the need to protect human life at every stage. "From each tiny child waiting to be born, to individuals nearing death, all are precious and deserve our care and protection. The Cardinal continued by citing the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis (The Joy of Love). He called every person to be "treated with the dignity they deserve. No one should be treated carelessly – everyone should be cherished and protected".

This homily, then, is not an indictment to anyone; it is a "strong call" to repentance that all may receive the forgiveness and blessedness. Christ "came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10, RSV). If one cares about this abundant life, will it be fair for such a person to take a stand against the physical life of another? Certainly not! Then, follow the golden rule: "Whatever you wish that men [or God] would do to you, do so to them" (Matt 7:12).

This Sunday, therefore, calls for the need to prioritize human life in all its forms, from conception to natural death. We must shun capital punishment, euthanasia or assisted suicide, homicide, terrorism, genocide and the destruction of lives through incessant wars. It calls for disarmament and a halt to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, biological and chemical. The resources of the world should be employed toward the emancipation of the plight of the poor, starving, sick and dying.

Also, governments should make adoptions services very easy so that "unwanted babies" need not be aborted anymore. And for us grandparents and parents, we should tell our young ones that in any relationship they are, they should ask themselves what will this relationship lead me into? Good or bad ending. If it is not leading you to any good result please stop. If you do not want a "Baby" avoid any thing that will make you have one. Simply put, we need transformation and redemption from the "culture of death" to the "culture of life". God is life! Choose life!

The First Reading (Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4) represents the cry of all "possible victims" of the destruction of life: "How long, O LORD? I cry for help ... Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and clamorous discord." The greatest problem of our time is that, perhaps without realizing it, many Christians are becoming "anti-Christ." Christ asserts his authority in the Gospel passage (Lk 17:5-10), saying, "Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So... when you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.' Jesus decrees "Go into the world make them my disciples..." He sets the terms. To the contrary, many are opting to become disciples of the "secular and liberal" world. Christ is saying, "Thou shall not kill" and the liberal and secular world is saying, "Thou shall have 'Freedom of Choice'" [to kill or not]. And many Christians are rejecting Christ's injunction, and deciding who lives and who dies. As Christ rightly stated, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt 15:8; Isa 29:13). The sad thing, my dear friends, is that the sound of this answer continues to reverberate through the ages in the choices against life. Indeed, as God laments, "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!" (Micah 6:3).

Beloved, God is the author of life. He conferred on humans a fundamental and inalienable right to life: "For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning... of every man's brother I will require the life of man... for God made man in his own image" (Gen 9:5-6). Accordingly, all human life is sacred from conception to natural death. Not even the abortion doctor is ignorant of what he or she is doing. Irrespective of whatever they call the baby in the womb, fetus or embryo, the fact remains that it is a destruction of life. The politician endorsing abortion knows this too. A Moslem scholar known as "Uthman dan Fodio" declares, "Conscience is any open wound; only truth can heal it." Yes! The scientific advancement we have made with ultrasound imaging technology has demonstrated this beyond any reasonable doubt.

Finally, my beloved people of peace, it is one thing to sin and say to God, "Lord, I am very sorry for my sins"; it is quite another to sin, and say to God and man, "It is not a sin... I will continue to do it!" Such impunity is dangerous before God. Obviously, many Christians have lost their baptismal and confirmation anointing. We need to wake up. St. Paul enjoins us in the Second Reading (2 Tm 1:6-8, 13-14): "Stir into flame the gift of God that you have... For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self- Control... Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God... Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us." May God save his people through Christ our Lord. Amen