

27th Sunday OT (Year C) – October 2, 2016

HAB 1:2-3; 2:2-4; PS 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9; 2 TM 1:6-8, 13-14; LK 17:5-10

The Devil is a divider who will use almost *any* tactic to separate Christians from Christ...*except for one*. He doesn't typically come right out and say, "**Deny Jesus Christ!**" because he knows that someone who loves Jesus would immediately reject the suggestion. So, he tends to use more *subtle means* and *subtle words*. But more on that later...

For now, let's deal with something closer to home, and very much in the forefront of many people's minds: **the 2016 presidential election**. But let's do so from a **Catholic perspective**. Let's consider the intersection of the *practice* of our **Catholic faith** and the *exercise* of our **civic duty**, especially when it comes to voting.

Let's first acknowledge that there has never been a political party in the United States that is perfectly aligned with Catholic teaching on every issue. That does *not* mean, however, that we are therefore *automatically* free to vote for either major party, because one party can be **much further from Catholic principles on the most important issues** than the other party. As a result of that, we are often faced with the task of discerning which *party* and which *policies* are most in line with Catholic teaching, and which ones aren't.

So many issues are subject to the **prudential judgment** of Catholic voters. What does that mean? It means that Catholics *can* legitimately disagree, for example, on the best *way* to address issues such as **racial injustice, education, the economy, immigration** and **healthcare** and still remain in good standing in the Church.

There are other issues, however, which touch on matters of **intrinsic evil**—actions that can **never**, at *any time*, under *any circumstances* be committed, promoted or even *enabled* by a faithful Catholic. But setting aside issues of intrinsic evil for now, let's consider some of the more common issues for which Catholics **can** legitimately exercise prudential judgment.

One such issue is **Affirmative Action**. This program aims to eliminate perceived disadvantages that minorities face when competing, for example, for admission to **college**. In our nation, one party favors Affirmative Action to bring justice and balance in our multiracial society. The other party holds that it penalizes high achievers by giving limited spots in the college classroom to less qualified

candidates, while denying more qualified students access. One party sees affirmative action as a matter of **justice**...while the other party sees it as *injustice*.

But, suppose a candidate for president promoted a policy that would make it *legal* for someone to **kill a black person** if that black person created a hardship for them getting the education *they* desired.

How many of you would be comfortable voting for that candidate?

Another issue that falls under the category of prudential judgment is **immigration**. One of the major political parties seeks to allow immigration with very little restriction. The other party is concerned that unrestricted immigration leads to, among other things, **non-citizens taking jobs that could be worked by citizens**. One party favors open borders—the other favors “law and order”.

Now, suppose a candidate for president promoted a policy that would make it legal for someone to **kill a Hispanic person** if the presence of that Hispanic person made it more difficult to pursue one’s career of choice.

How many of you would be comfortable voting for that candidate?

Thank God we don’t have a candidate from either party who *says* that they condone such policies. Nobody in their right mind would *say* such a thing—that we could kill **blacks** or **Hispanics**—*or anyone else*—just for the sake of protecting personal **economic** or **educational** interests.

Nobody would *say* it, but, as you’ll see in a moment...

There *is* a candidate, in *this* 2016 race for president, who along with that candidate’s political party does, *in fact*, sanction the killing of blacks and Hispanics in the situations previously described...*under one...particular...condition*:

That the **black person** or the **Hispanic person** is *still in his or her mother’s womb*.

Now, this candidate and party **certainly won’t say it that way, not publicly anyway**. Instead, they use words like “**choice**” or “**reproductive rights**” or “**women’s health**” or other *sanitized statements* in order to cover up *what abortion is* and *what abortion does*.

Now, before we go any further in discussing the *extremely sensitive issue of abortion...*

I want to say a word to any woman in this congregation here today—or among those watching or listening on TV or radio—**who has chosen abortion:**

God’s mercy is bigger than your sin and your pain. In ten years of priesthood, I have often been blessed to welcome a woman back to the merciful embrace of God the Father after she has admitted to, and repented of, her abortion in the Sacrament of Confession. A priest in such a situation has the privilege of assuring the woman that she has *never* lost the **love of God the Father**, nor her dignity as **his beloved daughter**, no matter what she did. **And so I say to these women today:** You do not have to hide from God any longer. I know it’s exhausting to pretend that **your pain is not real**, that **your loss is not immense** and that **your choice was not devastating**. But when you experience God’s loving mercy even *after* the abortion, you will *really* come to **know** and *experience* that God’s love in **forgiving our most serious sins** is even **greater** than his love in **creating** us. Your Father has been waiting for you for a very long time. It’s time for you to come home!

So, now, having shared **that important word** with *grieving mothers* let’s return to the subject of our duty as Catholics in the public square.

When we consider that a woman can walk into **Planned Parenthood** and have her baby put to death *because she doesn’t want to jeopardize her education or career*, we must acknowledge that the shocking scenarios described previously are not only **possible...not only real...but also among the most common** reasons for abortion in America.

Even the **word** “abortion” has been drained of its meaning—we treat it like nothing more than **a term that starts a heated debate** rather than *a procedure that stops a heartbeat*. Many want to treat abortion as merely one issue among many—but that requires that a person pretend not to know *what abortion is* and *what abortion does*.

So let’s stop beating around the bush with regard to the current presidential race:

- Do you know **which candidate and party** in this election **promotes** abortion and even promises to *expand* its availability here at **home** as well as **abroad**?

- Do you know that this candidate and party intend to *make you and me pay for other people's abortions* with our tax dollars—something that has always been illegal?
- Are you aware that this candidate and party, which until recently, said that abortion should be “**safe, legal and rare**” no longer even bothers to say that it should be *rare*—but rather, that it must be available any **time**, any **place**, even *up to the last moment that the fully formed, full-term baby remains in the womb?*

If you **do not** know which candidate and party I’m referring to, then you should not even *consider* voting until you *do* know! Ignorance in this area is unacceptable, because ignorance in this area costs millions of babies their lives and jeopardizes the souls of many Catholics voters.

On the other hand, if you **DO** know which candidate and party want to promote and expand abortion, and **you still intend to enable them to continue their war on the unborn with the help of your vote**, then it is my duty as a priest to tell you that your soul will be in grave danger, especially if you present yourself for Holy Communion after casting such a vote **with the full knowledge of what you’re doing**.

Every election season, when a priest addresses such topics from the pulpit, a certain portion of the population complains that he’s preaching politics:

“A priest has no business discussing politics in church!”

That’s what some *people* say.

But what does **God** say to the priest whom he has designated to be spiritual father for the people entrusted to his care?

The same thing he said to the Prophet Ezekiel: *“...I have made [you] a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked man shall die in his [sin], but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way; he shall die in his [sin], but you will have saved your life.* (Ez 33:7-9)

Another of the Devil's tactics is to encourage us to make excuses for *our participation in really bad things* by appealing to other *good things* that we support, which we try to convince ourselves somehow "cancel out" the grave evil we enable.

Take capital punishment, for example. If you bring up abortion, some people will say, "**I'm against capital punishment...and if you're against abortion, then you should be against capital punishment!**" Fair enough. What is the biggest objection to capital punishment? That **innocent people might be mistakenly put to death**. And it must be acknowledged that innocent people very well could be unjustly executed due to the many flaws in our legal system.

And this very reason for opposing capital punishment is precisely the reason that Catholics must never willingly support or even **enable abortion** with their **vote**. Because, while some innocent people have no doubt been put to death mistakenly through capital punishment, in abortion an innocent person is *always* put to death, and *never by mistake*. It's always chosen...always intended.

If a person is against capital punishment, then, they necessarily must be against abortion because the intention of abortion is to knowingly and deliberately kill an innocent boy or girl—each and every time.

What about **war**? People who vigorously oppose the wars in the Middle East, for example, often quote statistics on the great number of innocent people accidentally killed in the crossfire. "**Collateral damage**"—the innocent people killed in war—is, perhaps the greatest tragedy of war. But if a person **opposes** the **accidental killing** of innocent people in war, while **enabling** the *intentional killing* of the most innocent human beings on the planet *with their vote*—well...this is hypocrisy of the most extreme kind.

If a person opposes war because of the accidental, unintended deaths of innocent people, they necessarily must oppose abortion because the killing in abortion is neither accidental nor unintended, but always directly willed.

Sometimes we hear the **stupendously deceptive claim** that a candidate or party will *reduce* abortions by improving **economic** or **social** conditions, *while simultaneously promoting abortion as a right worth protecting*.

But let's face facts: Abortion is not *caused* by economics or social conditions. Economic and social factors are, no doubt, *circumstances that affect* a mother's decision in some cases, but they are **not** causes.

After all, if eliminating abortion were merely a matter of **economics**, or access to **healthcare**, or other **socioeconomic** factors, then *why do wealthy mothers also abort their babies?*

There are plenty of Catholics who, quite rightly, have criticized bishops and priests in recent years for not having spoken out more forcefully against the **sexual abuse** of children by priests.

Why, then, do **many of these same Catholics** want to *silence* bishops and priests who speak out forcefully against *killing* innocent children?

Why is opposing **sexual abuse** of children a matter of *justice*, but opposing the **murder** of children a matter of “**preaching politics**”?

Regardless of the resistance, a priest must follow the example of **Peter and John** in the Acts of the Apostles when it comes to preaching difficult truths. To those who sought to silence *their* proclamation of the Gospel these Apostles boldly responded:

“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for [I] cannot but speak of what [I] have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19-20)

A priest is not only **protected by the 1st Amendment** (at least for now).

He is also **bound by the 5th Commandment**—*Thou Shalt Not Kill*.

If a priest doesn't **speak up for** those most vulnerable in our society, and if the Catholic faithful don't **actively protect the** most vulnerable in our society by *refusing to enable their deliberate destruction with their vote*, then such Catholics are *condoning the killing by their cowardice*.

And what did St. Paul say to Timothy about cowardice in today's 2nd Reading?

God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord...but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. (2 Tim 1:7-8)

Part of every Catholic's *share in the hardship for the Gospel* is that we must repent of our actions that are **offensive to God** and **destructive to our brothers and sisters**. And we must oppose the threats to innocent life that are **most real** and **most urgent**. Make no mistake! There is no single issue that threatens innocent human life more **directly, consistently** and **urgently** than the deliberate killing of baby boys and baby girls in their mother's womb. **No...issue!**

In the time since this homily started, at least 30 children have been deliberately executed in the womb in the United States—and that's just the ones that are reported.

Let me sum up with some very challenging words:

“We have a serious obligation to protect human life, and especially the lives of the most innocent and vulnerable among us. Whoever fails to do this, when otherwise able to do so, commits a serious sin of omission. They jeopardize their own spiritual wellbeing and they are a source of scandal for others. Should they be Catholics, they should not receive Holy Communion.” Catholics in the Public Square, 4th Ed., p. 25

Now, I hope you realize that it takes a lot of courage for a priest to communicate such challenging words as these—reminding his people that some actions are so gravely sinful that they render a Catholic unworthy to receive Holy Communion until there is complete repentance.

A priest who is more concerned about the state of his people's souls than *they* are themselves, deserves the **esteem** of his people for his willingness to speak such difficult truth to them with genuine love—to put the welfare of his people's souls ahead of his own reputation, popularity or comfort. Such a priest should receive **respect, admiration** and **support**, rather than their **resistance** or **criticism**.

So please pray for, thank and encourage the spiritual father that God has appointed for you and who loves you enough to tell you the truth.

Because the priest who said these particular words...is your **bishop**...and mine.