

Respect Life Sunday

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10/5/14 (Rdgs from Year A, 27th Wk OT)

- The first Sunday of October begins Respect Life month in which the Church emphasizes life issues.
- Primarily in our time this focuses on abortion and euthanasia, and to a degree the death penalty as well.
- There's nothing here either liberal or conservative; it is simply the teaching of the Church.
- And the Church teaches: *“Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator... God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim... the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.”* (CCC 2258; Donum Vitae, intro. 5)
- Abortion, of course, is the worst—the killing of innocent human life in the womb... an offense against both God and mankind so grievous that a Catholic is automatically excommunicated for either obtaining one or helping someone to obtain one.
- Fortunately, the Archbishop has given pastors the authority to lift that excommunication if sufficient repentance of the person is perceived.
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- But elective abortion has always been considered a dire offense against both God and mankind... and for 2000 years the Church--guided by the Holy Spirit--has upheld and reinforced this principle.
- She teaches: *“...human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights [are] every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death.”* (Donum Vitae)
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- Looking to scripture as the basis for this teaching, we see in Genesis: *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him...”* (Gen 1:27)
- Another favorite verse is in Psalm 139: *“For it was you who created my being, knit me together in my mother’s womb. I thank you for the wonder of my being, for the wonders of all your creation.”*
- Some of the other scriptures attesting to the sacredness of human life:
 - Job saying to God: *“Did YOU not pour me out like milk...clothe me with skin and flesh, and weave me of bone and sinew? You have given me life...”* (Job 10:10-11)
 - God telling the prophet Jeremiah: *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you came to birth I consecrated you.”* (Jer 1:5)
- At the Visitation we read that Elizabeth, *“filled with the Holy Spirit”*, proclaims to Mary: *“Blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”*
- ...not: *“The mother of the embryo that will become my Lord”*, but rather: *“The mother of my Lord”*...only a few days after Mary conceived.
- And in one the earliest Christian writings (the Didache), written around the year 100, it is particularly emphasized: *“... you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten.”*
- Pope John Paul (SAINT Pope John Paul) recently reaffirmed this ancient teaching in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*: *“I declare that direct abortion...always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.”* (*Evangelium Vitae* §62).

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- The Church has never wavered from this position. And think about it: Does it seem more likely that God led the Church astray for 2000 years and has changed His mind, or that society—especially one that emphasizes self-centeredness above virtually all other considerations—has itself changed?
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- Another issue of life is euthanasia...the deliberate killing of the sick or elderly.
 - Though it has roots in something good—alleviation of suffering—it goes too far in the killing of a human life.
 - Some argue that people should accept death when they are no longer “useful”, or if they have a so-called “poor quality of life”... as if they are no more than a worn out toaster.
 - But as God’s child—given life by Him—a person is precious apart from his perceived “usefulness”. God alone is Lord of life.
 - And so Pope John Paul II also wrote in *Evangelium Vitae*: “*I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person...* ” (*Evangelium Vitae* §65)
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- As far as the death penalty goes, the Church teaches that, while not absolutely prohibited, it should be used only if there is no other way to protect others from a murderous criminal—a situation almost unknown in our day with modern prisons.
- For one thing, we cannot disregard the many wrongful convictions that have been reversed.
- People will argue about cost of holding someone for their entire lives, or that “they deserve death” for some hideous crime.
- But...everyone receives due reward or punishment from God; from Him there is NO escape.
- But Christians look to the infinite value of each soul—even the soul of the most terrible criminal.

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- ...and to deprive them of life may be to deprive them of the opportunity to truly repent of their sin, and come to Christ and receive salvation.
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- (Story of St. Therese and condemned criminal)
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- Thus the Church prays today, and please pray always, for a greater respect for life from conception to natural death...knowing that each human life was made special and unique by God.
- The value of human life eclipses all other issues...so work to protect human life, and insist that your leaders and representatives protect human life. Without life, there IS nothing else of concern.
- And if you have difficulty with any of these or other teachings of the Church, learn WHY the Church teaches what she does.
- ...and ask yourself: “*Why do I think I know better than 2000 years of deliberation in our Holy-Spirit-led Catholic faith?*”
- And don't be quailed into silence by someone saying: “I'm offended!” So what? As Winston Churchill said: “*You have enemies? Good; that means you've stood up for something in your life,*” ...and, of course, the apostles: “*Better that we obey God rather than men.*”
- And promote chastity in single persons...especially young persons.
- So many abortions would be avoided simply with greater realization and respect for the marriage bond as the only moral place for sexual relations. Honor God in your body through chastity!...that body of yours which is the temple of the Holy Spirit...the tabernacle of Christ when you receive the Eucharist.
- Each person is a masterpiece of God...a child of God...made in His image...a life not destroyed, but rather to be revered and cherished,.

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Reading 1

[Is 5:1-7](#)

Let me now sing of my friend,
my friend's song concerning his vineyard.
My friend had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside;
he spaded it, cleared it of stones,
and planted the choicest vines;
within it he built a watchtower,
and hewed out a wine press.
Then he looked for the crop of grapes,
but what it yielded was wild grapes.

Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard:
What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I had not done?
Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes,
did it bring forth wild grapes?
Now, I will let you know
what I mean to do with my vineyard:
take away its hedge, give it to grazing,
break through its wall, let it be trampled!
Yes, I will make it a ruin:
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
but overgrown with thorns and briars;
I will command the clouds
not to send rain upon it.
The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah are his cherished plant;
he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed!
for justice, but hark, the outcry!

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20](#)

R. (Is 5:7a) The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

A vine from Egypt you transplanted;
you drove away the nations and planted it.
It put forth its foliage to the Sea,
its shoots as far as the River.

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Why have you broken down its walls,

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so that every passer-by plucks its fruit,
The boar from the forest lays it waste,
and the beasts of the field feed upon it?

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.
O LORD, God of hosts, restore us;
if your face shine upon us, then we shall be saved.

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Reading II

[Phil 4:6-9](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
make your requests known to God.
Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding
will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is true, whatever is honorable,
whatever is just, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious,
if there is any excellence
and if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.

Keep on doing what you have learned and received
and heard and seen in me.
Then the God of peace will be with you.

Gospel

[Mt 21:33-43](#)

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:
"Hear another parable.

There was a landowner who planted a vineyard,
put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower.
Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey.
When vintage time drew near,

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he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce.

But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat,
another they killed, and a third they stoned.

Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones,
but they treated them in the same way.

Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking,

'They will respect my son.'

But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another,

'This is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.'

They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?"

They answered him,

"He will put those wretched men to a wretched death
and lease his vineyard to other tenants
who will give him the produce at the proper times."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:

The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

by the Lord has this been done,

and it is wonderful in our eyes?

Therefore, I say to you,

the kingdom of God will be taken away from you
and given to a people that will produce its fruit."