

2017

- Well...a new President inaugurated Friday—to both cheers of joy and wails of woe.
- But we ought always pray for those in office...that grace and wisdom be given them to govern us in ways pleasing to God... because only in that way is the common good of all attained—for God is the sole source of all good.
- Remember St. Paul’s admonition: *“I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for...all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.”* (1Tim 2:1-3 RSV)
- And St. Peter would write: *“Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor”* (1Peter 2:17) ...meaning whoever is in authority. If you don’t like the new President, still remember the words of Jesus: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”* (Matthew 5:43-44 RSV)
- Because, as Christians, we ought hate NO one, but pray for them and seek their good as fellow children of God...and as one whom Christ loved and for whom He died on the cross...remembering their burden of accountability, as Jesus warned, *“Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required...”* (Luke 12:48)

-
- And, of course, this weekend marks the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling legalizing abortion.
 - People sometimes ask why the Church is so adamantly against abortion...and in our existential, and now largely post-Christian world obsessed with “self”, culture’s values become entangled in—and often obscure—the absolute good of God’s teaching... even in Christians. Even among Catholics.

2017

- But...in matters of human life, we must go beyond a facile, superficial understanding, and seek the true good.
- And the ultimate good of all things on earth is: human life.
-
- We humans are, materially, simply “bags of mostly water”...a few pounds of chemicals mixed in...in an unimaginably complex, largely self-sustaining and regulating, chemical reaction.
- And yet...this mass of water and chemicals lives...calculates, designs and plans, loves and hates, weeps and laughs...all indicative of something more than the mere sum of our chemical parts, but rather endowed with something beyond the material—what we know as a spiritual soul.
- And because it is beyond the material, its source must also be beyond the material: God Himself, His existence affirmed in His actions in history...most especially and historically attested in the power working through Jesus.
- And thus God, as Creator of all, is master of all life...most of all, human life—which He makes in His own image. As St. Paul says: “*In Him we live and move and have our being.*” (Acts 17:28)
-
- When does human life begin? Is it at some indeterminate period during gestation? At birth, which physically is little more than a change of nutritional source for continued chemical reaction?
- No; life requires the animating principle of the soul, and therefore it must be infused at the most momentous instance—the beginning—of our existence...and thus human life must begin at conception.
-
- The holiness of the gift of human life is well attested in scripture, and abortion has been condemned both in Judaism and from the beginning of Christianity...up until this existential age...so much so that to receive, or to materially assist in receiving, an abortion is still automatic excommunication from the Church.

2017

- The protest is often: “It’s my body!” Well...in the Christian perspective, actually: no; our bodies are entrusted to us to the service of God and one another.
- But even in an atheistic perspective, being it “your” body doesn’t mean that you can do whatever you want with another’s body, which is not yours.
- One of the tragic analogies I’ve heard is: “It’s a parasite!” Well... using that erroneous reasoning, so is a babe at the breast...but that doesn’t mean you can toss him to coyotes when he becomes “inconvenient”.
-
- By its very nature and the design of God, sex entails an assumption of a sacred responsibility toward life—not only for conception, but for its continued cultivation. This is why sexual relations are holy, and rightly reserved for the stability of the family unit...beginning with that commitment of husband and wife in marriage.
- Human life is God’s greatest gift other than Heaven itself—each precious, “unique and unrepeatable” in the words of St. John Paul II—and thus parentage is one of the greatest of vocations and blessings.
- There are innumerable scriptures about the holiness and blessing of children and human life...but the one I find most influential is the Visitation. Mary, just a few days after her conception of Jesus, comes to Elizabeth, and Elizabeth, “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” as it says, exclaims: “...*why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*” (Luke 1:43 RSV)...not the mother of the blastocyst or embryo that will become my Lord, but rather “my Lord”—the fullness of His presence in His developing body present here and now in Mary’s womb.
-
- So let us have faith and trust in the many thousand years of God’s spirit working in the world—through scripture, and through the teaching of the Church via the Holy Spirit.

- And, if you know someone who has had or assisted materially in receiving an abortion, assure them of the mercy of God given through His Church...and that, by Pope Francis' direction, all priests are able to absolve from that excommunication I mentioned...if, as in all confessions, the penitent is truly contrite with purpose of amendment.
- Excommunication is not meant to be a permanent condemnation or separation from God and the Church, but rather meant to manifest to a person the realization of the seriousness and consequence of certain sins, and draw them to subsequent repentance and reconciliation...
- ...so that, in contrition and repentance, they may know the assurance of God through the prophet Isaiah: *“Come now...says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become [white] like wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18 RSV)
- So, as we hear in the book of Wisdom: *“Do not...bring on destruction by the works of your hands; because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things that they might exist...”* (Wisdom 1:12-16 RSV)

Reading 1

[Is 8:23-9:3-1](#)

First the Lord degraded the land of Zebulun
and the land of Naphtali;
but in the end he has glorified the seaward road,
the land west of the Jordan,
the District of the Gentiles.

Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness:
for there is no gloom where but now there was distress.
The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing,
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as people make merry when dividing spoils.
For the yoke that burdened them,
the pole on their shoulder,
and the rod of their taskmaster
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.

[Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

**One thing I ask of the LORD;
this I seek:**

**To dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,**

**That I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD
and contemplate his temple.**

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD
in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

[1 Cor 1:10-13, 17](#)

Reading 2

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that all of you agree in what you say,
and **that there be no divisions among you,**

but that you **be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.**

For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters,
by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you.

I mean that each of you is saying,
"I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos,"
or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

Is Christ divided?

Was Paul crucified for you?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel,
and not with the wisdom of human eloquence,
so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

[Mt 4:12-23](#)

Gospel

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested,
he withdrew to Galilee.

He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea,
in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali,
that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet
might be fulfilled:

*Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles,
the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light,
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death
light has arisen.*

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers,
Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew,
casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen.

He said to them,

“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

At once they left their nets and followed him.

He walked along from there and saw two other brothers,
James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets.

He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father
and followed him.

He went around all of Galilee,
teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom,
and curing every disease and illness among the people.

or

[Mt 4:12-17](#)

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested,
he withdrew to Galilee.

He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea,
in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali,
that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet
might be fulfilled:

*Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles,
the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light,
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death
light has arisen.*

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”