

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity
August 26, 2018
Homily for the Anglican Usage Mass
of the
St. Thomas More Catholic Parish
celebrated at
St. Joseph Catholic Church
Scranton, PA
John 6:60-69

Our Epistle today gives us the definition of manliness, insofar as it describes a man's responsibilities within the context of the family. In Ephesians, chapter 5, St. Paul teaches how men are to behave and why, concluding by the end of the lesson that the moral code he describes is for the salvation of both men and women.

When St. Paul teaches us that men are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, he is making clear reference to the death Jesus offered upon the altar of the Cross. It is the responsibility of every man to be willing to die to save his wife, just as Jesus died to save His Bride, the Church. This means in practical terms that the man of the house, on a daily basis, is a servant who washes the feet of the disciples, humbling himself and considering moment by moment what is best for those the Lord has assigned him to care for.

A man, in other words, is not to be a taker but a giver, not a consumer but a contributor. Laying down one's life means setting self-interest aside and making the sacrifices necessary that will get one's beloved into heaven. A man desires what is best for his wife and children, both in this life and in that which is to come. Therefore, he will desire to instill this spirit of sacrifice in his family, leading by example in demonstrating that loving God means loving our neighbor. In that he loves them, they will learn to love others, just as Jesus' love for the Church showed the definition of love.

A man then confronts two temptations, the first easier to resist than the second. His first temptation will be to devour the sheep under his care. Men falling prey to this temptation are at the root of the scandal now convulsing the Church. Rather than protecting their wives, they beat them; rather than feeding the lambs, they ate them; rather than saving God's children, they sold them. Man's natural inclination to selfishness and self-advancement in these cases has not been overcome. He is either wholly uncommitted to our Divine Master, or he is not making himself open to the power of God's grace, which has the power to transform sinners into saints. I say that this temptation is easier to resist because of the natural bonds of affection that even without God's grace in the Sacraments lead us to care for one another.

No, the harder temptation to resist is the second, and the failure of so many men to resist this temptation is the cause of our cultural and societal devastation, the current scandal in the Church being the logical outworking of having so many unmanly men. This second temptation is the refusal to stand up for the Truth when he worries it may offend. That is, many men set the Truth aside when their hearers tell them that they don't like it.

Consider today's Gospel. Jesus has just told His disciples that He is the Bread of Life come down from heaven. Moreover, He has said that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will have no life within you. His discourse on the Holy Eucharist was offensive, and the effect was

that many of His disciples walked away. What is striking about this incident is that Jesus doesn't go chasing after them. He lets them walk and asks the twelve if they will, too.

Too many modern men haven't learned this lesson. They are so concerned to remain in relationship with sinners that they will tolerate, even bless, all kinds of wicked behavior so that the offended won't walk away. There is not a chance in the world that these men will devour the sheep themselves; but the end result is that the sheep suffer because the shepherd avoids confronting wolves both within the fold and without it. Rather than forthrightly state, "This is the way it is," they compromise so that an artificial peace may be maintained and the offended will be convinced not to walk away.

The reality is that Love and Truth are inseparable. Manly men understand that to speak the Truth is one of the highest expressions of love; and a person's refusal to accept the Truth does not determine whether the Truth continues to be spoken. If we're going to chase after the offended who don't like what they've just heard, we need to repeat what we just said. Better yet, we follow the example of Jesus Christ and be assertive in the Truth, preaching the gospel in season and out of season, whether our hearers like or do not. The Church would have been spared much misery, and society as well, if men—bishops and priests, husbands and fathers—had not tempered what they said because they feared they would offend. By failing to speak the Truth, they failed to love; and we're all the worse for it.

Well, what needed to be said?

First, sexual licentiousness is the number one destroyer of human happiness and human flourishing. If men do not comport themselves in the way St. Paul describes in Ephesians, chapter 5, the civilization that the Church has built these past two thousand years will come to an end. If we fail to love our wives as Christ loved the Church, we are committing cultural suicide.

Second, sodomy is a sin that the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us calls out for vengeance from God. Those who impenitently engage in this anomaly demonstrate their unwillingness to accept the responsibility of what it means to be a man and thus demonstrate that they are unfit to be accorded any authority in the Church. The husband's responsibility is to give life, not take it, to father little ones, not devour them. If a man has so little concern for his own salvation, how can he possibly lead others to heaven? No man imperiling his soul and taunting God in this way can serve the Church as a priest. Only men who conceive of themselves as husbands and fathers are fit to be ordained.

Third, what the world thinks of the Church—her teachings and her members—doesn't mean squat. If we do what is right, we will be commended by God; and that is what matters most. If we are faithful, we will be successful; but if we set the Faith aside in pursuit of success, we can be sure we'll fail. Isn't this what we are experiencing now? We wanted the world to like us, so we compromised. Now the world hates us. That's a pretty bad deal, because it was authored in hell.

If we want to know how to start again, now that the edifice is in ruins, we must begin by reasserting the Truth found in Ephesians 5. And when the world walks away, let them. We can be sure that the witness of Catholic life and love will eventually draw them in, which is how God built the Church from the start.