

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 27, 2019

Homily for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

of

St. Thomas More Catholic Parish

celebrated at

St. Joseph Catholic Church

116 Theodore St.

Scranton, PA 18508

Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Sometimes in the sacristy after Daily Mass the few people who come have extended conversations. That happened again this past Thursday, and our topic of discussion was our lack of national unity, the breakdown of civil discourse and the political impasses we see daily visited upon our capital, Washington, D.C. Our impromptu conference ended after one of our number, Paul Prezzia, pointed out that as long as the slaughter of the unborn, rather than their protection, is enshrined in the laws of our nation, there cannot be, nor will there be, national unity.

This reality was writ large all week because of an incident after the March for Life that involved some Catholic high school students from Covington. I won't here get into the details of what actually happened, but the reaction in the press to the incident was instructive. What we saw is that the Catholic students were presumed guilty of an offense by those who support legalized abortion, principally those of the mainstream media. Even after they were shown to be innocent of the offense of which they had been accused, many commentators treated their innocence as an irrelevant detail. That is, because they had gone to the March for Life to stand up for the rights of the unborn, they were guilty, regardless of what had actually happened in front of the Lincoln memorial on January 18th. And because of this guilt by association with the pro-life cause, no amount of public shaming, vilification, or bullying was unwarranted. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the children from Kentucky received multiple death threats, had to have classes cancelled on Tuesday, and could only return to classes under armed guard on Wednesday.

Those forces in our nation that believe death is the solution to every problem can brook no compromise. Thus, while the March for Life incident had the attention of the press, we were accosted by the spectacle of New York state's new abortion law. On Tuesday, the forty-sixth anniversary of the Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions that legalized abortion in all fifty states, Governor Cuomo signed into law the removal of all restrictions on abortion. It is variously being called the 'abortion till birth act' and the 'guaranteed dead baby act'. He then ordered public buildings throughout the state to be lit up in pink, he said, as a light for all the other states to follow. He wanted to be clear that he associates abortion not with darkness, but with light.

Naturally, we wonder how we got here, and providentially we have been given an epistle that explains the basis, the foundation, of our nation's confusion and division. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church about the complementarity of the gifts that we all possess. We have not all received the same gifts; but each gift is indispensable, which, of course, implies that each person is indispensable. He uses the analogy of the human body to communicate his point, asking, "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?" Our problem in other words, is that we do not have a deep enough appreciation for the gifts of others, or perhaps even of our own gifts. Lacking this appreciation, we live in competition with each other, sometimes in competition with ourselves, eschewing the complementarity that makes bodily growth and life itself possible.

Well, how does this dismissal of complementarity relate to the issue of legalized abortion? The connection, actually, is rather simple: Because modern feminism has convinced so many women that femininity is a liability, the aspiration of such women is to live masculine lives. That is, lacking an appreciation of their own gifts, or how their gifts complement those of men, they reject motherhood, the defining characteristic of their sex, as motherhood inhibits their goal of becoming like men. From a legal standpoint, motherhood must therefore be abolished, and so the slaughter of the unborn is enshrined in law.

This perversion of feminism, defined by covetousness for masculinity, did not, however, occur in a vacuum. It was, in fact, the response to centuries of the devaluation of feminine gifts. In a nation that worships mammon, as our nation does—we even put “In God We Trust” on our money—the role of the provider, the breadwinner, came to be exalted as the most important, overshadowing all other roles in society, however equally important they may be. Women learned the wrong lesson from their oppression. Whereas they should have emphasized the critical importance of their role as educators and nurturers of the next generation, too many women concluded that they would have a pivotal role in the life of our nation only if they too became providers and protectors. The failure on our part as a society to recognize the inherent purpose and value of complementarity means that the invaluable role of mother is being abandoned by a large segment of society, and the implications for our future are frightening. One in four pregnancies ends in elective abortion, and our fertility rate has fallen well below replacement level, to 1.76 children born for each native-born American woman in her lifetime, even lower than during the Great Depression. Our failure to exalt complementarity and the equal role of women, who have given each of us life, means we are a dying nation, literally killing ourselves in order that we may all live the role God has appointed to men. To paraphrase St. Paul, “If all are men, where will the women be?”

Don’t despair, for the solution to our quandary is before us, right here at Mass this morning. We are blessed with a parish full of women who have embraced their call to motherhood and of men who value and uphold their adherence to the vocation God has given us. We have a school in which the truth of complementarity is being imparted to the next generation; and we are graced with a bishop who could just as easily explain these truths to you as can I, probably better than I can. It is in the creation of communities like ours that the future of our nation is ensured, and though we are in the minority for now, we won’t be for too long. It is easy enough to understand that those who embrace life will live, and those who embrace death will die. Our adversaries have chosen competition, and they’re miserable, and they’re dying. We’ve chosen complementarity, and we have many young lives here to show for it. It’s a lot more fun, I’d even say joyful.