

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Jon 3:1-5,10; Ps 25:4-9; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Mk 1:14-20

RESPECT LIFE 2012

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun

January 22, 2012, 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. Masses

Today is a sad day. It is January 22nd.
It is the 39th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark decision,
Roe vs. Wade,
the decision that legalized abortion in the United States of America.
Over 39 years, millions and millions of innocent, unborn children,
have been killed.

Abortion directly contravenes the Fourth Commandment,
"Thou shalt not kill" (Ex 20:13).
Abortion is contrary to the Declaration of Independence
which proclaims that America is about "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

It is the duty of government to protect its citizens.
It is the duty of decent people to uphold and protect the common good,
particularly when it comes to the weak and defenseless in society.
It is the duty of church and religion, no matter which faith, to proclaim the truth,
to work for what is right and good,
particularly when it comes to morals and virtues.
It is the duty of Christians to proclaim Jesus Christ,
who said, "I came that you might have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10).
It is the duty of Catholic Christians to proclaim the *Gospel of Life*,
reverence for all life from conception until natural death
(*Evangelium Vitae*, "The Gospel of Life," Pope John Paul II, 1995).

Pro-Choice is a very disturbing, distressing, and misleading "label."
Pro-Choice would have us believe that it is about freedom,
freedom over one's body,
freedom to choose what a person wants to do.
Except the freedom to do evil, or to harm, or to kill, is no freedom at all.
Those who use their freedom for bad purposes are not truly free.
Those who use their freedom to do evil are slaves to sin.
Jesus wants us to use our freedom to courageously do the right thing (Mt 28:20a).

There are many issues in life that are gray, but not this one.
This is about as black and white as an issue can be.
In the vast majority of abortions in America, over 95 percent,
it is not incest, not rape, not a congenital defect;
it is a healthy mother, a healthy child,
and an inconvenience or embarrassment – ended.

Today is a national day of mourning.

For us Catholics in America, tomorrow is a national day of repentance:
a day of sorrow for all of the sins that have been committed;
a day of sorrow for all of the sins that are still being committed;
a day to offer prayer, or to fast, or to do good works
in grief and mourning over of these atrocities,
and in the fervent hope the good people, hopefully like us,
will never tire of working to uphold the *Gospel of Life*.

God in heaven is deeply grieved over the shedding of innocent blood.

This is evident from the beginning of the Bible.

Adam and Eve initially had two sons,
Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1,2).
Abel was a good and holy man, innocent and blameless (Gen 4:4).
Cain attacked Abel and killed him (Gen 4:8).
It was an act of violence.
It was murder.
Innocent blood was shed on the ground.
And Abel's innocent blood cried out to God (Gen 4:10).

This is demonstrated even more vividly with Jesus himself.
Jesus embodies goodness.
Jesus is all love (1 Jn 4:8,16), pure and blameless (Heb 7:26),
the spotless, unblemished Lamb (Ex 12:1-28, esp. v 5; Jn 1:29,36),
without sin, innocent (Mt 27:4; Lk 23:47).
Jesus was scourged, and then he was nailed to a cross, crucified.
It was a terrible act of violence.
Innocent blood was shed on the ground that day.
And Jesus' innocent blood cried out to God.

The blood that Jesus shed reveals to us how sacred life is.

Abortion is an act of violence.
When an abortion is committed, innocent blood is shed.
And the innocent blood of a terminated unborn child cries out to God.

The innocent blood that Jesus shed on the Cross is life giving.
We receive his Precious Blood, his innocent blood, at Holy Communion,
and it fills us with his divine life (see Jn 6:57b).
Having been nourished by the Eucharist,
Jesus, the Bread of Life (Jn 6:35,48), and his life-giving blood (see Jn 6:54-57; 19:34),
Jesus expects us to uphold his gospel: *The Gospel of Life*.

Jonah went to Nineveh, a pagan city in a foreign land (Jonah 3:2,3),
a land of sin, evil-doing, corruption, and depravity,
and he cried out in a loud voice (Jonah 3:4),
and he challenged the people to abandon their wrongdoing,
and to live in a way that is pleasing to God.

Amazing people who were non-Jews, non-religious,
heard his prophetic message, took it to heart,
put on sackcloth and ashes (Jonah 3:5),
from the king on high (Jonah 3:6), as well as every citizen (Jonah 3:8),
and they admitted their sins, repented of their evil ways (Jonah 3:10a),
and ceased their wrongdoing.

America is an increasingly a pagan place,
a place that increasingly ignores God's voice.

Each of us, all disciples, are all called by Jesus like the twelve apostles (Mk 1:17,20),
all called to be Jonah's in our time and place.

Each of us needs to be prophets in our unique ways.

It may be prayer for the nation.

It may be to proclaim the *Gospel of Life* to others in our family,
or people at work.

It might be an assignment on the sacredness of life at school,
or art piece,
or a donation,
or a march in Washington,
or a rally at the state capital,
or a rosary walk through the streets.

It might be a phone call or a letter or an e-mail to a legislator.

The prophetic cry for reform needs to go, not to the king, but to the president and congress,
and our voices must not silent just because they have been ignored or resisted so long.

And we dare not focus only on others.

We need to pay attention to the prophetic message ourselves.

We need to uphold the *Gospel of Life* in our own personal lives.

Pregnant mothers in our own families need to welcome their children.

The fathers need to do the same.

Families need to rally around expectant mothers to support them.

When someone in our family is sick or dying,

or when we ourselves are sick and dying,

life is to be protected and upheld until its natural end.

Innocent blood cries out to God (Gen 4:10), and God is deeply grieved.

Jesus came that we might have life, and have it to the full! (See Jn 10:10).