

**27<sup>th</sup> Sunday, Ordinary time 2009 (B)**  
**Respect Life Sunday – 3/4 October 2009**  
**Homily<sup>1</sup> – St. Benedict’s Parish**

The story is told of a very wise nun who lived in a monastery, high on a mountain; a three day hike through the forest.

Many people came to her for spiritual advice.  
Word of her even gets to the king, who was very unhappy.  
He leaves his kingdom, hikes for three days, climbs the mountain and finally gets to the wise nun.

Out of breath.... He asked her: “Sister, what must I do to have a happy life?”  
She replied, “Always do good, never do evil.”  
The King is absolutely furious!  
And shouts: “I left my kingdom, hiked three days through the forest, and climbed a mountain, just to hear ‘always do good, never do evil?!’”  
“I knew that when I was three years old!”  
And the wise nun replied, “of course you know that, everybody knows it! My job is simply to remind you.”<sup>2</sup>

Always do good. Never do evil.

There is nothing new in our readings today<sup>3</sup> just reminders from our wise God.  
Basic stuff really.

God created us.<sup>4</sup>

God wants us to be a family.<sup>5</sup>

God blesses marriage and condemns adultery.<sup>6</sup>

God loves kids.<sup>7</sup>

God wants us to be happy.<sup>8</sup>

Oh, we can make it more complicated if we want to, but then we’re probably missing the point today.

We Americans get this.<sup>9</sup> This is basic American stuff today too  
“we are endowed by [our] Creator with certain inalienable rights;  
that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”<sup>10</sup>  
No nation on earth is as clear as we are on this.<sup>11</sup>  
“*We are endowed by our Creator with...Life!*”

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<sup>1</sup> More of a sermon than a homily. With the Bishops of the USA, I hoped to exhort the parishioners to respect human life today.

<sup>2</sup> Here I “baptized” a Buddhist story I heard recounted by Dr. Wayne Dyer on PBS television.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 2:18-24; Psalm 128:1-6; Heb. 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16.

<sup>4</sup> See Genesis 1 and 2, and the Profession of Faith “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen...” Human beings are the greatest of God’s seen creation.

<sup>5</sup> All four Scripture passages today explicitly reference familial relationships. – spouses, children, siblings, fathers and mothers.

<sup>6</sup> See Mark 10:2-12.

<sup>7</sup> See Mark 10:13-16.

<sup>8</sup> See Psalm 128:1 “Happy are all who fear the LORD...” (NAB)

<sup>9</sup> Noting that this is a particularly American focus on human life today at the request of the USCCB.

<sup>10</sup> *The Declaration of Independence*, Thomas Jefferson and others, written/edited June-July 1776.

<sup>11</sup> I think here of John Courtney Murray. S.J.’s *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*, Sheed & Ward, 1960. I am aware of the fact that some theologians point to him to justify their abortion dissent. I believe Fr. Murray would be appalled at their confusion of political exigency with theological Truth.

But sometimes we forget the basics.

We get buried in the details; we need to be reminded that *sometimes* the simplest answer is the best answer.

Here is a simple truth:

God loves life.<sup>12</sup>

All life!

That is God's first gift to us.<sup>13</sup>

We are in God's image and likeness<sup>14</sup> because we too are alive.

And we can love.

Love is for life.<sup>15</sup>

You see, with God, - no life is unwanted.<sup>16</sup>

With God – no one is unplanned.

– no one is alone.

– no one is unnamed.<sup>17</sup>

– no one is unloved.

It's unthinkable otherwise. God wouldn't be God any other way.

And we are called to be in His image and likeness!

Yet, look how far we are from God sometimes.

I'm still scarred by the words the doctor said to my wife and me in the first year of our marriage:

“Well, she's pregnant – are you keeping it?”

“Are you keeping IT?” **How dare he speak like that!**

My only daughter, possibly eliminated just like that.

Stunned, it took me a while to answer, “Of course we're keeping the child. Of course!”

Only then did he congratulate us.<sup>18</sup>

I wonder if he congratulates those who choose not to “keep it”?

It wouldn't seem right, would it? In fact it simply seems wrong.

Something has gone gravely wrong with a culture that greets life like that.<sup>19</sup>

That simple, self-evident<sup>20</sup> truth that God loves life haunts me sometimes.

I fear what our children's children<sup>21</sup> will say about our generation.

In fact, I think they will have to apologize for us to their children.

Perhaps I am naive, but I have great hope for our children.

As a high school teacher I think that they will see moral things more clearly than we do.

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<sup>12</sup> See John 3:16. The “world” clearly refers to human life.

<sup>13</sup> See Genesis 2:7.

<sup>14</sup> See Genesis 1:27.

<sup>15</sup> Thinking here of *Love Is For Life: A Pastoral Letter of the Irish Bishops*. Lent, 1985. The title itself at once references the permanency of marriage *and* conjugal openness to procreation.

<sup>16</sup> The use of the term “unwanted pregnancy” is secular to its core. There simply is no unwanted life in God's eyes. And we must see the world as God does!

<sup>17</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2156-2159, especially note on 2158 cf. Is. 43:1 and John 10:3.

<sup>18</sup> My only daughter Katherine Marie was born 15 June 1987.

<sup>19</sup> Contrast this with the blessed child greetings of Mary and Elizabeth in Luke 1:39-45.

<sup>20</sup> Purposely using language from *The Declaration of Independence*.

<sup>21</sup> See Psalm 128:6.

Our generation was so caught up in the “do whatever you want” mentality that we had trouble recognizing evil. We still do. We continue to confuse freedom with licentiousness.

So I wonder what our children’s children will say about our generation.

- Will they call us “barbarians” because we systematically eliminated the most vulnerable members of our society?
- Will they note that for the first time in human history a generation massively eliminated life in the womb?
- Will they wonder what changed in us?
- Will they wonder why, instead of working harder to eliminate childhood poverty, racism, disease and handicaps, we chose to eliminate poor children, minorities, Down syndrome babies, and physically and mentally challenged<sup>22</sup> people?
- Why instead of curing our social diseases, we got rid of our patients?
- Instead of making children more wanted – we got rid of the kids instead of the problems?
- Instead of allowing people to die with dignity and reducing pain and suffering, we chose euthanasia?

**Our children’s children won’t say we loved life, that’s for sure!**

But I want you to know this simple Truth: God loves life.

And you must love it too. All of it.

God said: It’s not good for you to be alone.<sup>23</sup>

And it is not good for you to be alone morally either.

Scripture and Tradition make that clear. We are brothers and sisters in Christ.<sup>24</sup>

Don’t think that, because you are personally opposed to abortion or euthanasia or poverty or unjust war,... that it’s ok for others.

That shows that you think they don’t really matter much to you.

You’re not getting the whole “brother and sister thing” are you?

What about being your “brother’s keeper?”<sup>25</sup>

What about being “a Light for the world?”<sup>26</sup>

What about, “whatsoever you do for the least of your brothers...”<sup>27</sup>

“Only you and God, eh?”

What about this family?

    this communion?

        this nation?

            and this Church?

Folks, we’re in this together, I’m afraid.

Care. Love life. All of it.

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<sup>22</sup> I was especially touched at the Reception of Communion at the 5 p.m. Mass when the six mentally challenged parishioners from a nearby group home received the Eucharist as they do every week- one with the most reverent bow, one helping a blind housemate in procession and another who repeats “Body of Christ” after me. They really and truly brought the sermon home to me.

<sup>23</sup> See Genesis 2:18.

<sup>24</sup> See Hebrews 2:9-11.

<sup>25</sup> See Genesis 4:9.

<sup>26</sup> See Matthew 5:14.

<sup>27</sup> See Matthew 25, verses 40 and 45.

I know you know all this Church.  
My job is simply to remind you:  
Always do good. Never do evil.