

HOMILY - SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2024

PRO-LIFE HOMILY, ST. JUDE'S

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME



FIRST READING: 1
CORINTHIANS 4: 6-15
PSALM 145
GOSPEL: LUKE 6:1-5

St. Paul concludes his self-defense to the Corinthians with a bit of constructive irony. He's addressing their self-inflation, exalted boasts, and sense of accomplishment, by contrasting their boasting with his own poverty and the difficult life he lives: his persecutions, vilifications, his hunger, his homelessness, his hardships. But he tells them that's ok. He'll do what he needs to do to serve his Lord.

And he asks them this great question:
What do you have that you did not receive?

It is a key question for all of us because it puts our lives, precious as they are in the eyes of our Lord, into a true perspective of our place in God's creation. We have nothing, we are nothing that he has not given us. We can't boast that we are smart, tall, short, (but nobody boasts of being short 😊) fast, athletic, a good dancer or piano player. No one can boast about the air we breathe, the size of our mansion, the beautiful wife I have, my beautiful children and grandchildren. It's all a gift from God. How can we be anything but humbly grateful? This really is the best premise to start from as we negotiate the world. It puts us in our place. Who are we compared to God?

We can't say, "God is awesome, he is so big, and we are so small." No. There is no comparison. There is no proportion between us and God. Zero! We are not comparable in any way.

Believing that God exists, (and there is no end to the proof of God's existence), and believing that he reaches out to us through scripture and the Incarnation of his Son, these are ideas many of us like to indulge, but sometimes we are not serious about him. He is not first on our list; he is not before everyone and everything else.

Even some believers treat God as if he were an adjunct to their lives. Someone we look up to in times of trouble but not really having anything to do with our daily lives and struggles.

We ought to pay attention to who he is and who we are before him. Many of us do not.

In the world that accepts and promotes abortion, euthanasia and transgenderism, God has no place. That's the point! It's a denial of God and a crowning of self with godhood. There is no obedience. There is no one to obey. And so there is no gratitude for our lives and all that is in it. It's a spiritual battle.

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So we, the faithful, must really begin to tighten our ranks. We need to be ready to stand shoulder to shoulder because the battle lines are clearly drawn. Our world, in some sense, is getting smaller but that's ok. St. Paul was perfectly happy to be persecuted. Jesus Christ says it is necessary,

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

(Mt. 5: 10)

Flannery O’Connor, commenting on the title of one of her novels, *The Violent Bear It Away*, which is taken from a line in the Gospel of Matthew 11: 12. Jesus tells the crowd:

“From John the Baptizer’s time until now, the kingdom of God has suffered violence and the violent bear it away.”

O’Connor writes,

“...And more than ever now it seems that the kingdom of heaven has to be taken by violence, or not at all. You have to push as hard as the age that pushes against you.”

This age is pushing mighty hard to destroy all that is sacred: the family, the genders, the sanctity of human life. The violence that Flannery O’Connor speaks of is spiritual violence. Violence in the same sense as in the Church, “... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The Church is meant to smash the gates of hell!

Now the gates of hell are at our doorstep, they are in our schools and in our hospitals and legislative halls. The gates of hell are the abortion mills. Those gates will not prevail against the Catholic Church, with Mother Mary we will crush the head of the serpent. We must push back hard, even if it means suffering. That’s the way it is. But that doesn’t matter because that is the way of God and the way to God. St. Catherine of Sienna said,

“All the way to heaven is heaven because Jesus Christ said, ‘I am the way.’”



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