

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

September 11, 2016

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

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Luke 15:1-32

If we want to understand what happened to our country fifteen years ago today, we must first understand what happened fourteen centuries ago in the Levant and North Africa. Lands that were entirely Christian were conquered by the forces of Islam, which came out of a place that was not very Christian at all. The result was the conversion to Islam of literally millions of Christians, a process that took centuries, but has nevertheless succeeded in transforming entire nations from their being nearly 100% Christian to now being about 100% Muslim.

Therefore, as I preach this homily today, I want you to understand that the people I'm talking about are the prodigal son from the parable in today's Gospel. So many Muslims today are descendants of Christians who turned aside from their Father's loving embrace. So many Muslims today are our brothers who have squandered their property—and their potential—in loose living. Look at the Middle East and North Africa today, and see how the prodigal son now lives in want. So many of his children would gladly feed on the pods that swine eat. So many of them perish with hunger, and more and more of them have begun to realize that in leaving the Church their ancestor sinned against heaven and before God. How do we welcome home the prodigal son and help people in our own day from making the same grievous error?

First, understand that Islam proceeds from the same utopian impulse that motivated the prodigal son to leave home. Muslims by and large seek to create heaven on earth and do so by the pursuit of sensual pleasures in this life, with the promise of yet more sensuality in the life to come. The prodigal son devoured his inheritance with harlots, which was his lame attempt to experience the joys of heaven by his indulgence in counterfeit sacraments, proposed to mankind by the devil. Muslims do the same thing by their unholy moral code that they claim is sanctioned by God.

Just as the prodigal son would not constrain his lust, the Muslim man is permitted four wives and an unlimited number of concubines, as long as they are women who are drawn from those populations that Muslim armies have conquered. What Muslims call marriage is not marriage at all, but the attempt on the part of Muslim men to satisfy the insatiable. If you want to see how unbridled lust lands one in the gutter, you can look to the parable of the prodigal son, or you can look at just about any Muslim majority nation. The adage here applies: if we try to have heaven on earth, we end up living in hell. One reason so many Muslims want to come here is that our nation is so much less like hell than their own attempts to create utopias.

But the prodigal son did not just pursue lust; he also ran away from and refused to heed legitimate authority. The Byzantine Empire, based in Constantinople, adopted the humane practice early on of exiling heretics rather than killing them. Do you know where Byzantine Emperors sent the enemies of all that is holy, good, right and true? They sent them to Arabia, so that by the time Mohammed was thirty, he had been exposed to every heresy the Eastern Church was actively combating. Those exiled men who had rejected legitimate authority and had made themselves their own pope helped seduce Mohammed in the fantasy that he had all the answers and could unite the world under one religion—not the one God gave for this purpose, Catholicism, but one he himself came up with. He made himself the sole authority and then brooked no dissent.

Therefore, Christians were not converted only, or even mainly, by the promise of unbridled lust. There were some converted by lust, but Christians were converted largely by the tendency that Satan shares with every other tyranny in the history of mankind: the imposition of order by the wholesale suppression of all dissent through the most barbaric of means. Mohammed did not exile dissenters, he killed them; and this practice continues among the Muslims to the present day. The prodigal sons who won't accept their father's lawful authority become the worst dictators, imposing on those they control a tyranny far worse than the one they imagined they formerly suffered under. In nation after nation conquered by Islam, the Christians who didn't want to suffer this tyranny anymore became Muslims themselves. So while the Church upholds many martyrs who died for the Faith rather than accept Islam, unfortunately there have been many more people who did not have the stomach for martyrdom and became Muslims instead.

In these conversions that have cost far too many Christians their eternal souls, there was, of course, a temporal advantage. Not only did the convert escape state sanctioned second class status, the new convert to Islam benefitted from Islam's aversion to usury. The former Christian's debts were all cancelled upon his conversion, and his former co-religionists were left holding the bag, making it all the more likely that they, too, would succumb to the economic pressure to convert. Imagine then how long the prodigal son might have continued in the indulgence of his lust if he had had his debts cancelled and been able to squander not only his own property, but the property he had stolen from others. It could have taken an extra-long time, in that case, to be reduced to abject poverty and thus to come to his senses.

The lies the prodigal son believed point the way to how we combat this scourge and why ultimately the Church will triumph over it. The worst lie he believed was that he is his own authority. Our voluntary and joyful submission to the teachings of Holy Mother Church will do more to combat Islam than could battalions of soldiers. Remember that wrapped up in the prodigal son's departure from the Truth was his denial that Jesus is God. Islam is derived principally from this heresy of Arianism, which, in denying the divinity of Christ, puts up for grabs every truth the Church teaches. We cannot honor Jesus without first and foremost honoring what he said about Himself, that He and the Father are one and therefore everything He has handed down to us through the Church He founded is from God. Beware of anyone who talks about how much he loves Jesus, but picks and chooses which words of Jesus he actually believes. Beware of anyone who imagines that any word from the Old Testament isn't from Jesus Himself. Insist upon the eternal Word's eternity, and live like you believe Him. Show that peace comes not by imposition, but by voluntary submission to the Truth in faith.

That living out of the Faith is exercised first in chastity. Just as lust was the downfall of the prodigal son, so lust is the cause of most of our societal ills in the West today. Our neighbors need examples of moral purity—people who are faithful to their spouses, fiercely monogamous, and open to the precious gift of life. At every opportunity remind your neighbors, who can't stop talking about sex, what it is actually for. As charitably as you are able, shut down anyone who exalts the pleasure of the marital act without reference to its power to help impart life. If we don't remember that it's for life, it will before very long be our death. The indulgence of all our appetites makes us weak to resist those who preach that heaven is a drunken whorehouse. To live chastely is to resist this tyranny.

Thirdly, practice economic justice. I do not here advocate state control of the economy, but rather economics rooted in love. The exploitation of Muslim workers in places as diverse as Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Egypt does nothing to help us win over to the Truth those who are suffering so we can buy cheaper clothing. To love people with your money is simply to tithe your income to the Church, buy mostly just what you need, and give people their due. The utopians can't make inroads over debt if we have little of it and don't by our habits force others to assume it. Loving our neighbors as ourselves must have concrete economic implications.

Finally, remember that the Muslims are the prodigal son who has not yet come home to the loving embrace of his Father. Just as we resist the drug addict in our home by hiding all the valuables, so he won't use

them for his habit, we must love Muslims in the same way. We cannot give them one inch, one iota, of the control over others they desire. It is when we don't give them everything they want that they will come to recognize the true nature of their condition, they will repent, and they will come home to the Church so many of them left starting fourteen hundred years ago. When they do, we will shower them with gifts, just as the Father did the prodigal son, gifts held back until the prodigal sons come to their senses.