

Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

October 16, 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

Luke 18:1-8

To be vindicated means that one has been shown to be correct, or that one has been shown to be not guilty. The widow in the Gospel we heard today desired to be vindicated against her adversary, that is, to be shown that she was correct or innocent in regard to whatever the conflict may have been. Jesus' promise, the lesson of this parable, is that God will vindicate the faithful who cry to Him day and night. Not only that, Jesus promises that He "will vindicate them speedily."

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has designated October Respect Life Month and had suggested October 2nd as the observance of Respect Life Sunday. However, I believe that this lesson from Jesus about vindication lends itself much better to preaching about these issues than did the Gospel from two weeks ago. Thus, I'm going to talk today about how God has truly vindicated the faithful who have stood up for life these past eight-and-a-half decades, how He has shown that the Church's teaching in this regard is correct.

You've probably noticed that the baby bottles for Pennsylvanians for Human Life have made their annual appearance, and I know a number of you have already taken them to begin donating your spare change to help this important advocacy organization. Another announcement that has come up is the course our parish is offering on the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*. I commend this course to you and would have you know the course text has arrived this past week in the mail. Those of you who would like to begin reading now in anticipation of the course may do so, but in truth this is a text with which every Catholic should be familiar.

Casti Connubii was written in 1930 by our late Holy Father in response to the Anglican Communion's approval of contraceptive use earlier that same year. The Pope thought it necessary to remind the world what Christian marriage actually looks like in light of the distortions being proposed then by Anglicans and other Protestants. To say that Pope Pius XI has been vindicated in the decades since he wrote this would be an understatement of the first degree.

In his day there were still many secular and Protestant voices expressing their reservation about the legalization and normalization of contraceptive use. The Washington Post editorialized against it, and in 1931 the president of the American Medical Association said that universal acceptance of contraception "...would open the door to unbridled dominance of the basest passion...and...it would strike a death blow to self-control and to the dominance of the home."

Thirty-seven years later, however, when Blessed Paul VI wrote the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, those secular and Protestant voices had been silenced. The only institution in the world speaking the truth about the sanctity of marital relations was the Catholic Church. As the world embraced the lie of population control to counter the fraudulent premise of over-population, the Pope went against his own advisory council to declare that the truth had not changed and, indeed, he could not change it: contraception is always a grave sin against God and man.

The Lord promised speedy vindication of the faithful, and it came for Blessed Paul VI just a year after he died. He had said in *Humanae Vitae* that the widespread voluntary use of contraception would mean the imposition of this cancer by state authorities. China's one-child policy, replete with mandatory sterilizations and forced abortions, was instituted in 1979. Even atheistic Communists were forced to admit that the one-child policy was a disaster, and the Church was vindicated again when the policy was rescinded last year. China now has a two-child policy, and I don't think we'll have to wait thirty-five years for the atheists to admit this also is a disaster. The Lord will vindicate the faithful speedily.

This vindication has come, though, by great sacrifice on the part of the Church over the years. One could make the case that St. John Paul II dedicated much of his pontificate to the defense and broader articulation of *Humanae Vitae*. He devoted every Wednesday audience for five years to this topic, and in the middle of this time period was shot for his trouble. The assassination attempt on May 13, 1981, occurred half-way through those lectures that he was offering the world on the sanctity of marriage and the sanctity of human life. The devil did not want him to finish, and had he died, the *Theology of the Body* would not have made it to publication in its present form.

The widow received vindication because of her persistence, and Jesus commends this same sort of behavior to us. When it appeared the whole world was against them, Blessed Paul VI and St. John Paul II continued to speak the truth. They have been vindicated, not only as the myth of over-population has been exposed for the lie it is, but also in the embrace by so many young Catholics of the teaching about marriage articulated by Pope Pius XI in *Casti Connubii*. Even as the culture of death advances on many fronts, there is a revolution occurring within the Church. The moral degradation of the last ninety years and the pain it has produced have led countless souls to the conclusion that Holy Mother Church was right all along; and they're trying to live out what she's been teaching for two thousand years.

Our parish is evidence of that vindication. On the one hand, we have many large families that reflect the Gospel of Life and who entered the Church because of the Gospel of Life. But we are also part of a movement within the Church dedicated to rediscovering the buried treasures of our past and then putting them into practice. Just one example will suffice: I have insisted since our inception that all our Masses be celebrated *ad orientem*, with the priest facing the same direction as everyone else while speaking to God the Father. The new clergy handbook for our diocese, which Bishop Lopes will promulgate early next year, declares that this practice is normative for all of our parishes and parochial communities. Indeed, just one parish is left to make the switch back to this practice that has obtained since the very beginning of the Church's corporate worship. Our decision to say Mass as we did at St. Anthony's and St. Clare's and to have these three altars here at St. Joseph Church installed against the wall has been vindicated.

In other ways we're still waiting for vindication, which means we must be ever more persistent with our prayers as we cry to God day and night. That is, I led our parish to purchase this building in this neighborhood because the poor are most vulnerable when it comes to succumbing to the lies of the culture of death. Their suffering is also most acute in terms of broken homes and other forms of social dysfunction. Indeed, organizations like Planned Parenthood openly and brazenly target poor neighborhoods so they can profit off of this suffering most lucratively. You endorsed this vision to help the neediest in our midst when you gave the money to purchase this campus. In the four years since we came here, it has become clear that missions like ours – to convert the poor so that they may be saved from the peddlers of the culture of death – missions like ours require outside help to be sustained. This mission will survive to the extent that those who don't live here give generously to save those who do.

Please offer this up in your prayers, as we work to defend life and propose by our presence an alternative to the culture of death, that God will raise up people of means to help bring this work to fulfillment.