



Diocese of Charlotte
The Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis
Bishop of Charlotte

Homily

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 8 – 9, 2004

I.

The Gospel readings today and over the next several weeks focus on the question: “How do we enter into the kingdom of God?” This Sunday Our Lord gives the answer: By being ready to welcome Christ when he comes again; you do not know when he will come; be vigilant in doing the Lord’s work and you will enter into his kingdom.

In coming weeks Our Lord will provide us with further elaboration on that theme in the Gospels - “How do we enter into the kingdom of God?” – and we will hear the answer given: by entering through the narrow gate (21C); by practicing humility (22C); by renouncing all our possessions (23C); by repenting of our sins (24C); and Mary in her Assumption will be presented to us as one who by her holiness has already entered fully into the kingdom of her Son.

But today’s Gospel message is: Be vigilant; be prepared for the Master’s return, so that you are ready to welcome him.

Our goal is the kingdom of God. If this is what we want, then we must prepare ourselves for it. If we want to enter the kingdom of God, we must already try to live in the kingdom of God.

This past week Archbishop Donoghue, Bishop Baker, and I issued the statement on pro-abortion Catholic lawmakers and Holy Communion, and we meant to address those lawmakers in the spirit of today's Gospel: Live now in the kingdom of God so that you are ready to welcome Christ when he comes. Do those lawmakers realize the serious harm they are doing to our society by promoting evil in our country? We meant to call them to have a change of heart, and promote laws that will protect the life of the unborn, rather than destroy the unborn.

This is our goal: God's kingdom.

The pro-abortion Catholic lawmakers are creating scandal in the Church by saying they are practicing Catholics and receiving Holy Communion, while at the same time promoting abortion legislation – promoting what is gravely evil.

There is a glaring contradiction there. Since they have chosen, on a very, very grave matter, to separate themselves from the communion of the faith of their Church, they cannot come to Holy Communion - it is a contradiction - until they have had a change of heart.

The focus of the statement this week was admittedly very narrow indeed – only pro-abortion Catholic lawmakers.

I am grateful for people's calls and letters this past week. Some people have also reminded me not to forget other important moral issues, for instance euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, death penalty, preemptive war, and health care, to name a few. I assure you, the Church will continue to speak on all these moral issues, while at the same time remembering that not all moral issues have the same moral weight.

Procured abortion is always intrinsically evil and can never be justified. It is a direct attack on an innocent human life. In

his encyclical on the Gospel of Life in 1995 the Pope referred to the fact that today many people have lost a sense of how grave abortion is. Because it is accepted in the popular mind, in behavior, and in the law, people are losing the ability to distinguish between good and evil, even on so fundamental issue as the right to life of the unborn (*Evangelium vitae*, 58).

The destruction of human embryos for stem cell research is also intrinsically evil, as is euthanasia. They can never be justified because all these directly target and destroy innocent human life.

Other moral issues do not have the same moral weight.

On the death penalty, for instance, the encyclical reminds us that the death penalty may be justified in very limited instances: “in cases of absolute necessity ... when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society [and today] such cases are very rare, if not practically non-existent” (*Evangelium*

vitae, 56; cf. also CCC 2267). The Catechism reminds us that war, for instance, may also be justified under certain defined conditions (CCC 2309).

But procured abortion may never be justified. Euthanasia may never be justified. Destruction of human embryos for stem cell research may never be justified. They are always intrinsically evil.

There is a lot of work for the Church to do on many fronts.

III.

Today's Gospel reminds us that the kingdom of God is our goal. Be ready to welcome Christ.

We are here at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist precisely because the kingdom of God is our goal. The Eucharist is the pledge of future glory, a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. We already possess the beginning of eternal life in the Eucharist: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:54). The Risen Savior, already reigning in glory in his kingdom, feeds us on his body and blood, and is preparing us by means of this nourishment for the fullness of the kingdom of God one day.

May Christ bring all of us into his kingdom.

+ Peter J. Jugis

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