

# MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED

January 28, 2018 – Third Sunday Ordinary Time

## Spirituality Ponderings Pro-Life and Fear

Here is the second part of my homily from the Respect Life Convention.

A few years later, my own grandmother would begin to suffer more and more from dementia and Alzheimer. It was very painful to watch this once independent woman suffer the way she did. During this time my mother did her best to take care of her and my mother would ask me from time to time to come over and stay with her for an hour so that my mother could get out of the house .

There was a large part of me that did not want to because seeing my grandmother reminded me of my fears. My fear of being helpless, of not being in control, of being pitied, etc. and there were times that I almost told my mother "no". In the end, I did spend a lot of time with my grandmother and there are some moments from these visits that I treasure the most. For example, I can remember one time we were sitting in the living room and watching television when my grandmother turned to me and asked me where my children were. This surprised me greatly because she knew that I was a priest and that I did not have children. I spent ten minutes trying to convince her of that fact. In the end I just gave in and told my grandmother that my supposed children were at home with my supposed wife.

This calmed my grandmother down for about ten minutes. She then turned to me a second time and asked me where my children were. Not wishing to argue with her, I told her that they were at home with my wife. She then shot me this look of disappointment and proceeded to inform me that priests should not have children. I could not help but laugh for at this time because I could not win for losing.

I chose these three stories from my life to illustrate to you that being Pro-Life for me has had nothing to do with philosophical arguments of when life begin but rather my being Pro-Life has had everything to do with overcoming fear.

I can imagine no greater pain in life than to lose a child. This knowledge of the pain comes from having lost my older sister when she was four and I was two and from listening to my mother pour her heart out to me in later years. Jenna's parents though were willing to bravely face this pain because of the love they had for their daughter. In our world today many men and women are choosing to have an abortion because they are afraid of how a child is going to "mess up" their lives especially if this child has a developmental disorder or fatal disease. Jenna's parents' brave declaration that they would be willing to do it all over again teaches us that human life is worth all the troubles it may bring because a human life is



priceless. I know Jenna's smiles and hand holding made me and others love her instantly. We never saw the illness but rather the precious gift that she was. We just had to overcome our fears to get to know her.

Watching Ann suffer was not a pleasant experience but learning from her how to be grateful for the small things, helped me have courage to walk with her and later with my grandmother as they neared death. Doing so, though, meant that I really had to face my own fears and not only the fear of death.

Death in some sense did not scare me. What scares me is the fear of losing control and being so vulnerable. It takes courage to see that God can still use us in our terminal illness. Ann courageously taught me so much and she continued to love her family with every ounce of strength she had until it was her time to go. She bravely held nothing back from her family.

Finally, when I hear people say "quality of life" in regards to euthanasia, I cannot help but think of that person as being a coward. It is easy to blame the person with dementia for the way that we are feeling and it is much harder to look inside and see the fear of death, of not being in control, and of being vulnerable as our desires.

A priest who had battled cancer for most of his life once described illness/sickness as returning to our greatest but simplest dignity – that of being a child of God. My grandmother could not do much for herself but she still taught me a lot and brought great joy to my heart when I bravely overcame my fears and allowed myself to spend time with her.

These experiences and others have allowed me to come to the conclusion that the greatest

enemy in the Pro-Life movement is fear. Perhaps this is why Gabriel when informing Mary of God's plan for her to have a child out wedlock began with "Do not be afraid."

As we leave this Mass, this convention, and enter back into the battle for life, let us remember to treat the people that we find ourselves at odds with over the issue of life not as the enemy but rather as victims of fear. When we are on the sidewalk outside plan parenthood let us make sure to offer everyone that passes by a smile so that people everywhere will know that we care about them and want what is best for them. When we find ourselves in a heated argument over life issues let us keep in mind our goal is not to win the argument but rather to help the person we are arguing with choose life by reminding them that we care

about them also and we desire to help them face their fears. When we encounter those, who are suffering from their sins against life let us offer them not only God's mercy but our own as well. Finally when we see others struggling because they chose life let us assist them in their struggles – showing them gratitude for having a large family – offering support as they struggle with taking care of elderly relatives – and more.

Let us instead have the courage to face our fears and help others face their fears when it comes to life issues. May we help those in crisis pregnancies, difficult pregnancies, and other situations where life is threatened to no longer be afraid.

When fear is defeated life will be victorious.

## Breaking Open the Word

### **January 28, 2018 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Lectionary: 71 Gospel MK 1:21-28**

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

#### **Spiritual Reflection:**

To the degree that your ego grows will your apostolic work be a failure. The more you allow your ego to die, so much the more will your apostolic work flourish (cf. Jn 3:30). – Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan The demon is only concerned about himself. Jesus is concerned about others.

#### **Spiritual Questions:**

1. How selfish are you?
2. How does selfishness lead to evil acts?
3. How selfless are you?
4. What demons do you need to have Jesus drive out of you?
5. How can you manifest concern for others?



## Prayers for the Week

### THE PRAYER FOR RADIATING CHRIST

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Yours. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Your presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus! Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You shine, so to shine as to be a light to others; the light, O Jesus, will be all from You; none of it will be mine: it will be You shining on others through me. Let me thus praise You in the way You love best: by shining on those around me. Let me preach You without preaching, not by words, but by my example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what I do, the evident fullness of the love my heart bears to You.

### A PRAYER TO RESOLVE TO DO BETTER

Most merciful Jesus, from now on I want whatever You want. I have made up my mind to avoid all sin and to follow You with bravery and courage. I will try above all to correct myself in this particular matter (here mention one thing that you are going to avoid especially between now and your next confession). O my Redeemer, strengthen my resolution by the merits of the

Blood You shed for me on Calvary. I really want to make up for the past. With Your help, which I humbly ask for, I will try hard to do whatever You want of me.

### THE PRAYER THE ROYAL BANNERS FORWARD GO

The royal banners forward go; The Cross shines forth in mystic glow, Where Life for sinners death endured, And life by death for man procured. Where deep for us the spear was dyed, Life's torrent rushing from His side, To wash us in that precious flood Where mingled, Water flowed, and Blood. Fulfilled is all that David told In true prophetic song of old; "Amidst the nations, God," saith he, "Hath reigned and triumphed from the Tree." O Tree of beauty! Tree of light! O Tree with royal purple dight! Elect on whose triumphal breast Those holy Limbs should find their rest. On whose dear arms, so widely flung, The weight of this world's ransom hung: The price of human kind to pay And spoil the spoiler of his prey. O Cross, our one reliance, hail, Thou glory of the saved, avail To give fresh merit to the Saint, And pardon to the penitent. To Thee, Eternal Three in One, Let homage meet by all be done; Whom by the Cross Thou dost restore, Preserve and govern evermore. Amen.

## Catholic Trivia



### Last Week's Answers

Put a C next to the Cardinal Virtues and a T next to the Theological Virtues

|              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| C Prudence   | C Justice   |
| __ Faith     | C Fortitude |
| __ Hope      | __ Charity  |
| C Temperance |             |



### This Week's Questions

- True or False
1. Linus was the second Pope.
  2. The Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity.
  3. Philip was a brother of Andrew.
  4. Joseph's father was named Jacob.

## Quotes of the Week

"The media only writes about the sinners and the scandals, he said, but that's normal, because 'a tree that falls makes more noise than a forest that grows.'" — Pope Francis

"I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security." — Pope Francis

"How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure

but it is news when the stock market loses two points?" — Pope Francis

"Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs, or anything else—God is in this person's life. You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God." — Pope Francis,

## Pro-Life Corner

Pro-Life Quote: "It is not 'progressive' to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life." — Pope Francis

**Pro-Life Prayer for January:** Prayer for the Unborn

You are our strength, the light by which we walk, the truth by which we talk.  
You are our hope, the promise to which we hold, the story that must be told.  
You are the peace this world cannot provide, that overcomes our pride.  
You are our God, the One whose name we praise to whom our hands are raised.  
Please help us in our everyday lives to be guardians of life. May the weak and vulnerable, the poor and outcast, and those in need of mercy, find in us a pathway to you. Amen



## Saint Monica Society Prayer For January

**Christmas Prayer for Fallen Away Catholics**

By your Grace we are forgiven, in your peace our lives are lived. By your touch we know healing, in your strength are we made whole. When this is forgotten, our focus on self, your face obscured, forgive and restore. Take our mustard seed of faith and let it grow, take root and blossom in our hearts and lives and in a special way please return our friends, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters back to the true faith. Through our Savior Jesus Christ and in no other name do we ask this. Amen

**St. Monica Society**

Please join us in praying a special prayer each month for Catholics who have fallen away from their faith.

## Catholic Humor

1) For our pastor's 50th birthday, the congregation decided to give him a new suit. He was so touched by the gift that the following Sunday he stood before everyone and, with tears in his eyes, announced, "Today I am preaching to you in my birthday suit."

2) At the pearly gates, St. Peter greeted a minister and congressman and gave them their room assignments.

"Pastor, here are the keys to one of our nicest efficiency units. And for you, Mr. Congressman, the keys to our finest penthouse suite."

"This is unfair!" cried the minister.

"Listen," St. Peter said, "ministers are a dime a dozen up here, but this is the first congressman we've ever seen."

3) At the pearly gates again, a taxi driver and minister are waiting in line. St. Peter consults his list and says to the taxi driver, "Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

St. Peter next greets the minister saying, "Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Just a minute," says the minister. "That man was a taxi driver, and he gets a silken robe and golden staff while I get a cotton robe and wooden staff. How can this be?"

"Up here, we work by results," says St. Peter. "While you preached, people slept; while he drove, people prayed."