

**Twenty-Ninth Sunday C**  
**Archbishop Joseph Naumann**  
**Catholic Bar Association Mass**  
**Our Lady of Guadalupe Cathedral; Dallas Texas**  
**October 15, 2022**

**I**

**Gratitude for Catholic Bar Association**

Thank you for your invitation to be the homilist at the CBA Red Mass being celebrated on this 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Liturgical Year. It is a privilege to be with you. I am very grateful for the Catholic Bar Association. This is such an important and necessary organization for the Church in the United States. I am grateful to the leaders and all who worked hard to begin this Association and work hard to make it grow.

God definitely has a sense of humor. What are the chances that the Red Mass for the Catholic Bar Association would coincide with the liturgical calendar's selection for tonight's Gospel featuring what is sometimes referred to as the Parable of the Corrupt Judge? Fortunately, we do not have any of those in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century USA Courts. When I was involved in planning Red Masses many years ago, I was always told the key to a successful turn out of attorneys for a Red Mass was to get as many Judges as possible to attend.

I also am grateful for the opportunity to concelebrate Mass with Bishop Edward Burns and for his allowing me the privilege to preach. He is one of the most respected and talented leaders within the Bishops Conference. He is also a great Shepherd for the Diocese of Dallas – a very vibrant, diverse and growing Catholic community.

**II**

**Infant of Prague and the Affairs of the Heart**

In the very first Parish I was assigned as a newly ordained priest, there was a wonderful young woman who felt very clearly that the Lord was calling her to Christian marriage and to be a Christian mother. There was just one problem; the Lord had not provided her with a husband. She had dated a number of guys but either they did not have the same values or there was not the right chemistry.

Her Grandmother urged her to light votive candles and say a prayer each week in front of the image of Jesus known as the Infant of Prague. Her Grandmother felt “The Infant” was a specialist in such matters of the heart. So the young woman faithfully lit a votive candle and offered a prayer each Sunday before the shrine of the Infant of Prague.

After many months of doing so, she came to the rectory one Friday night in tears. She had been let go from her job working as receptionist and secretary for a group of attorneys. She had just weeks before received an excellent performance review. It was not because she was not competent or a hard worker that she was fired. She was let go because one of the partners’ wives had a friend who wanted to get back into the work force. My parishioner had the least seniority in the office. She was the low person on the totem pole.

The young woman was distraught. She did not understand God. She was trying to live uprightly. She was praying persistently. Yet, there was no one on the screen in terms of the man of her dreams. And now this, she had lost her job. She wanted a refund for all those votive candles.

I was a young priest and did not know exactly what to say to her. We had not covered this precise scenario in the Seminary. I did know enough not to refund her money, but told her rather to persist in her prayer.

### **III**

#### **Persistence in Prayer**

The over-riding theme in our readings tonight is readily apparent. In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples this humorous parable of the Judge who is petitioned by a persistent widow to rule in her favor. The judge ignores her for a long time. He is not moved by the apparent justice of her cause but is eventually worn down by her persistent pleading. This widow must have been a formidable woman, as the Judge finally renders her a just decision, because he is afraid that she might come and strike him.

This is just one of several instances in the Gospel where Jesus tells the disciples that the most important element for prayer, besides sincerity, is persistence. Recall the parable a little earlier in Luke’s Gospel about the man who bangs on his neighbor’s door in the middle of the night seeking some bread for his guests. His neighbor gets up to give him bread, not because of his altruism, but to stop him from banging on the door.

Jesus is not saying that we need to badger God to motivate God to do the right thing. He is using these human examples of how persistence pays off in this world with our fellow human beings. He draws the contrast that if we will respond to persistence for less than noble motives, how much more can we be certain that our Heavenly Father, who desires only what is best for us, will respond to our pleading.

#### **IV**

#### **The Miracle of Dobbs**

The Supreme Court ruling in the Dobbs case was an amazing victory of Pro-Life tenacity and perseverance. I have been in a leadership position in the Church's the Pro-Life efforts for almost 40 years. I remember in the early years, there was hope that we might be able to pass a constitutional amendment.

It takes an overwhelming consensus of the American people to change the Constitution. Over time, the focus of the movement was to achieve more modest victories, e.g. to prevent funding of abortion or attack the most egregious forms of abortion such as partial birth abortion.

Since the Court had created the problem, it seemed reasonable to focus attention on changing the Court. For decades, Pro-Lifers attempted to elect Presidents who were committed to appointing Justices that would be willing to acknowledge the judicial weakness of the Roe decision and to elect a Senate who would confirm constitutionalist judges.

This proved very difficult as well. For decades, even with a Pro-Life majority in the Senate, if we did not have 60 votes to overcome a filibuster, our objective was stymied.

It is hard not to see God's hand, the Holy Spirit's involvement, with the Dobbs decision. The Democrats actually opened the door by getting rid of the filibuster on some judicial appointments. When Trump was running for President, his Pro-Life credentials were thin. He wisely made a promise to nominate Judges off of a list that had been approved by the Federalist Society.

Amazingly, Trump has the opportunity to appoint three Justices to the Supreme Court in one 4-year term. Ruth Bader Ginsburg dies at a moment that allows Trump enough time to name his third nominee for Court, but close enough to the election that Democrats and Biden are afraid to attempt to do to Amy Coney Barrett what they did to Brett Kavanaugh.

Amazingly, five of the Supreme Court Justices, three of them Trump appointees, make up a majority in Dobbs to overturn Roe. Justice Alito authors the opinion that brilliantly exposes the judicial fallacies of Roe and opens the door for State legislatures and the Congress to determine abortion public policy.

For Pro-Lifers, this was the equivalent of the Berlin Wall coming down and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Something many of us never thought we would see suddenly happened!

## V

### **Kansas Lesson – No Time to Lower our Prayer Arms**

However, as we quickly experienced in Kansas, the overturning of Roe did not mean the abortion war, the culture war, was over. We poked the Devil with the Dobbs Decision and the devil's response has been ferocious.

In Kansas, we were attempting to correct by State constitutional amendment, a horrific ruling by the Kansas Supreme Court that claimed to have discovered a right in the Kansas Constitution that no one knew was there for more than 150 years!

With the national media spewing misinformation that because of Dobbs, women would not receive care for ectopic pregnancies or miscarriages, and with millions of dollars from the abortion industry and their donors pouring into Kansas, and with the secular media not fact checking the accuracy of the pro-abortion messaging, but instead amplifying the misinformation, Kansas felt the effect of the shock wave of a post Dobbs, pro-abortion Tsunami. We did not just lose, but we were defeated by a startling margin.

## **VI**

### **Pro-Life Counter Effort**

Pro-Life won a major battle with Dobbs. However, the pro-abortion reaction is comparable to Putin's recent saturation missile strikes in Ukraine in response to the Ukraine's military success against the Russian army. The counter attack is on, and it is intense and vicious.

The Pro-Life response is one that must elevate and intensify our educational, pastoral and advocacy efforts. Most importantly, we must increase our prayer efforts. To use the analogy of the first reading, this is no time to lower the arms of prayer. We must pray even more and with greater intensity

Fifty years of legalized abortion has convinced many Americans that we cannot survive without the ability to kill our own children. People are afraid: What if my daughter or grand-daughter has an unintended pregnancy. We must expand our educational efforts, continuing our well-reasoned arguments aimed at changing minds, while at the same time appealing to the hearts of our fellow Americans. We must help people recognize all of the victims of abortion, not only the baby in the womb, but the Mother and Father – their families and friends.

In my priestly ministry, I have not encountered a more profound sorrow and suffering than that of parents who have suffered the death of a child, no matter the age or stage of development of the child. However, with post-abortive parents, you layer on top of that suffering the reality that they chose the death of their child. As Pope Francis characterizes it, it is the equivalent of hiring a hit-man to kill a child. The grief and guilt of post-abortive parents is so intense that it can only be healed by God's mercy and grace.

We must defend and increase our support for Pregnancy Resource Centers and Abortion Alternative Services. However, we must simultaneously promote and expand our post-abortion ministries of healing and mercy.

## **VII**

### **The Battle for the Soul of our Nation**

President Biden speaks about fighting for the soul of our nation. He is right that there is a true battle for the soul of the United States, but sadly he is on the wrong side.

His aggressive and ghoulish abortion promotion policies are a big part of the problem. However, abortion is not the only battle front. There is a best-selling book entitled: ***Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation*** by Sophie Lewis. This book is indicative of a serious conversation that is happening in higher education institutions and beyond.

Our society has already re-defined marriage. With Gender Theory invading public elementary and high schools, children and adolescents are being given puberty blocking drugs without parental knowledge and, in some cases, undergoing mutilating surgeries.

If the current Administration has its way, Catholic Hospitals will be forced to perform abortions and sterilizations or be denied government reimbursement for authentic medical care. If this Administration has free reign, teaching the virtue of chastity and Christian sexual morality will be considered a hate crime.

## VIII

### **Thomas More: Advocate of Truth and Defender of Marriage**

Thomas More, the patron for Lawyers and Diplomats, provides a great example for those involved with the administration of justice and the formation of public policy. He was a man of virtue but also of persistent prayer.

Robert Bolt, the author of ***A Man for All Seasons***, saw Thomas More's fidelity to conscience as making him a "hero to selfhood." From Bolt's ideological vantage point, More was not a hero because what he believed was necessarily true. Bolt believed that More is to be admired because he remained true to **HIS** convictions in the face of powerful opposition. Bolt reflects the bias of modernity, namely that there can be conflicting truths. I can have my truth and you can have your truth, even if they contradict each other.

In his recent biographical portrait of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More, Judge Robert J. Conrad gives a very different perspective of Thomas More's adherence to conscience, one that I believe is actually much more accurate to what More himself held.

Conrad describes the mindset of More and Fisher as not *self-confident*, but *Christ confident*. Conrad portrays Fisher and More not as followers of self-will, *“but servants of the one true God who spoke through his Word and his Church. Their strength of conviction was rooted in their shared belief that God was truth and that his Church was a truth-telling institution.”*

Their confidence in Christ and His Church was not based on a naive or blind faith. They saw clearly the weakness of many of the individuals who were entrusted with the leadership of the Church. Still, they were confident it was Our Lord’s Church. No matter the frailty of some of its leaders, More and Fisher were confident that Jesus would not abandon His Church. Conrad asserts: *“The centrality of conscience is not located in the supreme self but rather in submission to eternal truth.”*

## IX

### More, A Man of Prayer

Thomas More, as a young man, had spent some time discerning the possibility of a religious vocation at a Carthusian Monastery. Throughout his life, More kept a very disciplined prayer life that was the foundation for his wisdom and virtue.

He also made certain that his family and household observed a well ordered prayer routine. They prayed several psalms daily as part of their morning and evening prayer. For meal prayers, one of the children always read a passage of scripture with a brief reflection on its meaning.

When imprisoned in the tower for not taking the oath declaring Henry VIII the head of the Church in England, he was grateful to the King for providing him this time of prayer and asceticism. More’s Faith and life of prayer allowed him to approach his execution with serenity and even humor. He did not see his execution as a defeat, but his final opportunity to most powerfully witness to His Faith in the Risen Jesus who had defeated both sin and death.

## X

### A Man for All Seasons and Times

When I was in college, I went to bed many nights listening to a cassette tape of the final scenes of *A Man for All Seasons*.

After being falsely convicted of treason and sentenced to death, Thomas More eloquently articulates the rationale for his refusal to take an oath that not only proclaimed Anne Boleyn as Queen of England, but bestowed upon the King the title Head of the Church. More declares the Act of Supremacy to be not only contrary to the Magna Carta and English law that guaranteed religious freedom but, more importantly, a violation of the authority of the Church as instituted by Jesus.

I listened over and over again to More's courageous defense of marriage and the Church, hoping that somehow I could absorb the Saint's wisdom and virtue. Indeed, Thomas More is ***A Man for all Seasons and Times***. He witnessed to the truth even when it cost him position, prestige, financial security, personal freedom and, eventually, his life in this world.

As we face attacks on marriage, the family, the sanctity of life and the Church and her moral teaching in our own time, let us beseech this Saint for all Seasons to pray for us until, in his words, ***"we merrily meet in heaven."***

## XI

### **A Happy Ending**

Returning to the story of the young woman in my first parish, within a week she found a new job comparable to the one she had lost. At this new office was a young CPA who was also a member of the same Parish. They started dating and eventually became engaged. I had the privilege of witnessing their marriage, now more than 40 years ago.

Things do not always turn out so neatly. We cannot always in this world understand God's response. Yet often, given a little time and distance, we see His wisdom. We see that perhaps what we were asking for was really not good for us. We see that, when we think the Lord has forgotten us, He is in the process of responding to our needs in a much better way than we could have imagined.

## XII

### **Give God Time**

Prayer does work miracles. I have seen healings. I have met former abortionists who are absolutely convinced that they were prayed out of the abortion clinic by the faithful, persistent prayers of people they did not even know until after their conversion.



Earlier this month, we celebrated the feast of the Holy Rosary that is celebrated on a date when the Christians turned back, by the naval victory at Lepanto, an Islamic attempt to invade Europe. The victory was universally believed to be the result of the faithful praying of the rosary.

I am convinced that the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of communism throughout Eastern Europe and Russia without bloodshed, was the fruit of decades of faithful prayers. Similarly, I am convinced that the Dobbs Decision was the fruit of the prayers and faithful work of so many in the Pro-Life movement.

Give God time. Ask for what you truly believe you and others need and which you believe is good. And trust. Trust that God will answer, and His answer will be perhaps for what we asked, but if not, it will be something so much richer and wiser than we could have imagined to have sought.

Take heart in the truth of the words Thomas More wrote to his Daughter, Margaret, from prison with his execution becoming more and more certain: **“And, therefore, my own good daughter, do not let your mind be troubled over anything that shall happen to me in this world. Nothing can come but what God wills. And I am very sure that whatever that may be, however bad it may seem, it shall be the best.”**

Be faithful in prayer and know that our God is always faithful!