

## **A Day of Prayer and penance for Life January 22, 2007**

In all the dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. The Mass “For Peace and Justice” (no. 22 of the “Masses for Various Needs”) should be celebrated with violet vestments as an appropriate liturgical observance for this day.

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 373*

### **Preaching for Life            January 22, 2007**

January 22<sup>nd</sup> has been designated by our Bishops as a day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. The Mass “For Peace and Justice” (no. 22 of the “Masses for Various Needs and Occasions”) should be celebrated with violet vestments (see “General Instruction of the Roman Missal,” no 373). Readings may be taken either from the Mass of the day, the Feast of Saint Vincent, or any readings from the Mass “For Peace and Justice,” Lectionary for Ritual Masses, vol IV, nos. 887-891.

The following brief reflections from the readings of the day are offered to assist homilists in preaching for life on January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Heb 9:15, 24-28/ Mk 3:22-30 (317)

#### **FIRST READING**

**2 Samuel 5:1-7, 10**

There were so many reasons why David should lose. As he stood before the city gates of Jerusalem, he was only 30 years old. Untried, untested and a child in the face of the Jebusites. “You’ll be defeated,” they assured him, “all it will take to defeat you is the blind and the lame!”

In all these years that we have gathered to pray and to work for the right of each little child to live, there must be days when you feel like little King David standing before the powerful forces of this world occupying a ground which rightly belongs only to God. Yet what made David grow “steadily more powerful”? Was it his military might, or his extraordinary skill, or the fact that he was smarter than everybody else in the room? No, it was none of these. What brought King David victory was the fact that “the LORD of hosts was with him.” And that, is what will bring us victory as well.

#### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

**89:20, 21-22, 25-26**

Unlike many Responsorial Psalms, the 89<sup>th</sup> Psalm contains a story. It is the story of King David, who was not supposed to amount to very much. He was young, the runt of the litter. When Samuel came to Bethlehem to anoint the new king of Israel from among the

sons of Jesse, the last person they thought God would choose was David. It's like the day that he stood before the soldier they called Goliath, slingshot in his hand. King David is like the patron saint of the underdog.

But the psalmist reminds us that those we would dismiss as too little or too insignificant shall be the very ones he chooses to do great things. The second preface for the Feast of Martyrs reminds us that God chooses the weak and makes them strong in Christ.

In this Psalm God places a youth over his people, and finds a servant in a child. How many of the chosen ones of God died before birth, their mothers missing them today? And what will we do to protect God's anointed ones?

## **GOSPEL**

**Mark 3:22-30**

Just like us, and the powers of this world, the scribes know all the answers. They had figured it out: if Jesus drives out devils, he must be possessed by a devil himself!

Such stupidity seems so evident to us in retrospect, but the scribes, learned man that they were, were confused. It was only Jesus who could set them straight. "If a kingdom is divided against itself," he told them, "that kingdom cannot stand."

The world is so often confused today by all the manifestations of the evil around us. We come up with all kinds of explanations for why this is so. Our answers always end up as formulas for selfishness and darkness and foolish narcissism. To improve the life of a young mother, we kill her child. To relieve the suffering of an old man, we take his life. To protect society from one who has killed, we kill him. Our wisdom is a dead end street.

But the only kingdom that really matters, the kingdom of god, is the place where real truth resides. Unless we embrace him who is the truth, the way, and the life we have no hope of figuring out what this life is really all about. His kingdom, the kingdom where the last will be first, where the littlest will be the greatest, and where those who serve are counted first of all, who must never be divided.

So to work for the kingdom, to cast out of the evils of this world, is to work for life, for truth, and for its Gospel. That, in the end, is what this day is really all about.

## Intercessions for Life for January 22, 2007

For those deprived of their human needs  
and their human rights,  
that they may be given the dignity  
which God confers on all his people;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For those who mourn the death of a child,  
that they may be given the strength and  
courage to face the future,  
and that we may be given the understanding  
and  
compassion to say the right words in their  
times of need;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all who are forgotten or thrown away,  
and especially for the poor, the sick and the  
aged,  
that God might change our hearts  
and move us to love them as the image of  
Christ;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For every person who suffers from violence,  
and especially for women whose pain breaks  
their hearts,  
that through the intercession of she whose  
heart was pierced with a sword,  
they might know peace and strength;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For all parents who struggle alone to raise  
their children,  
that God will give them the strength of the  
children of God  
and the support of his holy Church;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For those condemned to die,  
and especially for men and women on death  
row,  
that their plight might move the hearts  
of the people of this nation;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For those who have grown very old,  
and especially for those tempted to die,  
that God might grant them patient endurance  
to do his will and serve his Gospel;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For young mothers everywhere,  
and especially those who are tempted to  
despair,  
that through the child they carry deep  
within,  
they might know hope and joy;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

That the Lord,  
who rescues the life of the poor from the  
power of the wicked,  
might send an angel to guard and  
protect all unborn children;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For mothers,  
especially those wracked with fear,  
depression or despair,  
that the new life of their child  
may touch them with the eternal love of  
God;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For the bishops and priests of our Church,  
that by their commitment to the innocent  
child,  
the Gospel of Life might be preached  
in each of our churches;  
*We pray to the Lord:*

For doctors, nurses and other medical  
personnel,  
especially those tempted by abortion,  
That God might change their hearts  
and give them the conviction  
of the Gospel of Life;  
*We pray to the Lord:*