

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP
HOMILY NOTES
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
July 1, 2012
“Responsible Patriotism”

Introduction:

- This week, we look forward to celebrating the Fourth of July. What do you appreciate most about being an American? What do you value most about our country?
- Unlike some places in the world, we have the ability and responsibility, as Americans, to take an active role in political life without fear of danger or intimidation.
- We should make our voices heard because it is our right and our responsibility as members of a democratic society, but also because it is our right and our responsibility as people of faith! Our faith can and should inform our political conscience.
- Today, the Scripture readings begin by pointing to what is wrong in our world due to the reality of sin. Yet, they also remind us that we have reason for hope. The readings challenge us to think about the role we have, as people of faith, in making hope a reality for all.

First Reading: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

vs. 2:23-4: “For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world.”

- The first reading reminds us that we are made in God’s “own nature.” The human person is in the image and likeness of God, and this is what gives every person human dignity.
- But at the same time, “by the envy of the devil, death entered the world.” We are made in God’s image but we are marred by sin.
- Here are some examples of the presence of sin in our world:
 - Over a million unborn children in the U.S. are never born each year because of legalized abortion.
 - In our own country, 46 million people—including one in four children—live in poverty. Globally, 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty—on less than \$1.25 per day.
 - You can probably think of other examples of the presence of sin in our world, reflected in larger social problems, structures and systems. These examples of social sin are rooted in original sin. The decisions and actions of many individuals, taken together, create “structures of sin” that result in injustice and denial of human life and dignity for many.

Responsorial Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12, 13

vv. 2: “I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.”

- The reality of our fallen nature and world could lead us to despair, but the Psalmist calls us to hope, despite the presence of evil and sin. The Psalmist proclaims, “I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.” Notice who is doing the rescuing and who is being rescued!
- As Christians, we have hope because of Christ’s resurrection. Life conquers death. We have hope because we know that God loves us and calls us to participate in His work of building his kingdom of love and justice—a work that will only be fully realized in heaven, but which we are called to begin now. We can repeat with the Psalmist: “I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.” We are rescued from sin and death through the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Second Reading: 2 Cor. 8:7, 9, 13-15

vs. 13: “Your abundance at the present time should supply their needs, so that their abundance may also supply your needs, that there may be equality.”

- As Catholics, we are called to see Christ in all members of our human family. We believe that every human person is made in God’s image and possesses inherent dignity, which we are called to protect.
- In our second reading today, Paul urges the Christian community at Corinth to respond to this call to ensure that the dignity of all our brothers and sisters in Christ can be protected. Paul acknowledges the poverty and need of another Christian community, in Macedonia, and exhorts the community in Corinth to be generous—to ensure that their brothers and sisters have enough.
- This reminds of us our own responsibility toward all God’s children. As one Body in Christ, we are called to respond to the needs of others. This is an essential part of our faith!

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

vv. 41-42: “He took the child by the hand and said to her, ‘*Talitha koum,*’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise!’ The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. At that they were utterly astounded.”

- The Gospel tells the story of the child of the official whom Jesus raises from death.
- This inspiring miracle is not merely a story. It is an example of Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom—in which we are called to take part!
- We can’t raise people physically from the dead, but we can reach out with the compassion of Jesus and help to raise people from despair to hope, from injustice to freedom, and from conflict in ourselves, our nation and our world, to community. We are all in need of healing and transformation, and we are called to allow Christ to work through us to heal what is broken and transform what is wrong.

Application:

This Sunday coincides with the celebration of our nation’s independence. It is a time to reaffirm the vision of our founding fathers, to whom a free and just society is one in which “we

hold [certain] truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Our founding fathers set up a government in which we all can participate, through electing representatives, making our voices heard year-round by telling our elected officials what we think, and being involved in the communities in which we live. This is patriotism in the best sense of the world; we are rightly proud of our heritage as Americans and strive to uphold our national pledge of “liberty and justice for all” by being involved in the political process and working for the common good.

But we participate in this way not only because we are Americans; we also do so because we are Catholics. Today’s readings remind us that although we live in an imperfect world and the well-being of those who are poor and vulnerable is often threatened, we are called, as both Catholics and as Americans, to be agents of justice and protectors of life and dignity. We must bring the light and love of Christ to bear on our communities and world. In a statement on political responsibility called *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. Bishops write:

“As the Holy Father [...] taught in Deus Caritas Est, ‘The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful’ (no. 29). This duty is more critical than ever in today’s political environment, where Catholics may feel politically disenfranchised, sensing that no party and too few candidates fully share the Church’s comprehensive commitment to the life and dignity of every human being from conception to natural death.

“Yet this is not a time for retreat or discouragement; rather, it is a time for renewed engagement. Forming their consciences in accord with Catholic teaching, Catholic lay women and men can become actively involved: running for office; working within political parties; communicating their concerns and positions to elected officials; and joining diocesan social mission or advocacy networks, state Catholic conference initiatives, community organizations, and other efforts to apply authentic moral teaching in the public square” (Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, no. 16).

The Church has a responsibility to be involved in the political process. The bishops remind us: *“The Church is involved in the political process but is not partisan. The Church cannot champion any candidate or party. Our cause is the defense of human life and dignity and the protection of the weak and vulnerable” (Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, no. 59).*

With four months until the national election, the Church asks us as Catholics to form our consciences, become educated about the issues, and to apply our moral principles to public issues. This is something we are called to do not only during election season, but every year, and all-year round. Defending life and the family and protecting the poor and vulnerable are what we are called to do as both Americans and as Catholics.

This week, as you celebrate the Fourth of July festivities, take a moment to learn about what the U.S. Catholic bishops are teaching about the call to participate in public life. Visit the bulletin for information on resource on the bishops’ website.

Sample Bulletin Announcement:

Catholics Care. Catholics Vote. Participate in political life.

This week, as we celebrate the anniversary of our great nation’s independence, take a moment to reflect on your responsibilities—both as an American and as a Catholic—to be involved in political life. In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. Catholic bishops remind Catholics, “In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation” (no. 13). Visit www.faithfulcitizenship.org today to read the statement, watch videos, download podcasts, and access other great resources.

Bulletin Insert

On June 30-July 1 weekend, parishes may also wish to use the [bulletin insert](#) on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, found in the “Parishes and Schools” section of www.faithfulcitizenship.org.