



Homily – In Thanksgiving to God for the Gift of Human Life

On the anniversary of Roe Vs Wade 1/22/2013

By Very Reverend Father John Geaney C.S.P.

Two horses stand in a meadow. They look like each other. But if you were to draw close you would notice that one horse is blind. Rather than put the blind horse down the owner decided instead to give him a full life. To make that possible he put a bell on the other horse. Whenever the sighted horse moved, the bell rang out and the blind horse followed the sighted horse's lead knowing that he would not stumble. In the evening when it's time to go to the barn, the sighted horse walks toward the paddock with his bell ringing, and the blind horse follows him home, knowing that he will be safe.

In our society there are many people who are blind to the evils of harming life from the first moment of conception to natural death. The people might be seen to be like the blind horse and what the blind horse of our society needs is another horse, those who are committed to life in all its forms to ring the bell of Christian living so that any diminution of life will be regarded as unthinkable and unacceptable. People who believe that it is alright to assist people who wish to commit suicide would profit from a conversion, a change of heart; people who are racist would profit from a conversion a change of heart; people who believe abortions must be legal would profit from a conversion, a change of heart; those who work to uphold the death penalty would profit from a conversion, a change, a change of heart; anyone who violates our profound Catholic Christian conviction about the sanctity of human life would profit from a conversion, a change of heart. But those conversions, those changes will only take place, those bells will only ring when we establish in our own lives the kindness and the charity and the love of God that tells others that being Christian and defending life in all its forms makes infinite sense. Suppose that we could ring our bell of Christian living without being shrill, without being offensive, and without condemnations of those who do not think as we do? That was Jesus' way; Jesus did not condemn the woman at the well he gave her life that is eternal. When Jesus' way becomes our way, when we have made ourselves into the kind of Christians whose way is the seamless way of Jesus' loving concern, then we will indeed be ringing the bell that leads those who are blind to Jesus and his way, home to the loving God who is our Father, home to that place in which the taking of life will be totally unthinkable and unacceptable.

In today's first reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans Paul utters a magnificent prayer to God. He says to us: "Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" As Catholic Christians we know that – we know in our bones of the depths of God's riches, his wisdom and his knowledge. We know too that expressing that to others is never easy. We recognize how vulnerable we are to human weakness; we recognize how easy it is to forget about God. And yet – we can only bring people who do not agree with us about how important life is by being the best Christians we can be.

And what does it mean to be Christian and Catholic? St. John tells us about being Christian when he tells us about Jesus' role, and we find a piece of that role in the in the prologue to John's gospel from which we read tonight. There John speaks about Jesus who is the Word, and he says that "the Word was God." And further he says, "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all the people." The reference that St. John is making here is to Genesis. Two things – the first thing that God creates is light. Secondly, the life that God creates in Genesis is the life that we see all around us – life in the animals, life in the plants, life in the seas, and the human life that God breathed into all of

us. John also refers to a new life in Christ – the life that is eternal. But there is no questioning the fact that for St. John, God is the source of all life.

So what are we to do when life is attacked on all fronts; by abortion, by mercy killing, by racism, by the death penalty, by the failures to protect our environment? We must turn again to God as the Christian Catholics we are and live according to the call of Jesus. We must become true disciples of the light who is life. Because when we do, we will not have to be concerned about Roe v Wade or about mercy killing, or the death penalty, or racism or the carelessness with which people go about dealing with our environment. Instead people who see us living as good Catholic Christians will say: “See how those Christians love one another.” They will see that our love for others founded on our love for Christ leads to life. They will see that life must be honored; that destroying life for whatever reason is both unthinkable and unacceptable. Will it be a perfect world? No, because it is always difficult to live as a Catholic Christian. Nonetheless, it will be a time in which we can follow St. Augustine who said, “Love, and do what you will.” Love for St. Augustine meant to be holy; if we are Catholic Christians who love then we will be holy. Those who are the ones blind to the reality of the harm that comes with killing, will listen for the bell of the Christians who are truly living a life in Christ; listen for the bell of those who are truly holy and follow those Christians to a safe haven of concern where Christ is the light of life. And we can say with joy and a resounding knell of our bells that comes from living as Christians in the way Jesus did without rancor or privilege or condemnation; we can say as we did earlier in our opening prayer: “O God, who adorn creation with splendor and beauty...renew among your people a readiness to nurture and sustain your precious gift of human life.”