

I. “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

A. No sooner does St. Peter utter these divinely inspired words and does our Lord make his the supreme shepherd of the Church, then he argues with our Lord about the means by which Christ is to redeem His people.

B. On the one hand, St. Peter makes an astounding profession of faith about the identity of the redeemer, and on the other, he makes it clear that he does not yet understand the means by which Christ will redeem the world.

C. The words “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” flow from his lips with such ease.

D. Yet when he hears our Lord predict that “go, suffer, be killed and be raised,” Peter shrinks from it and even argues with the Lord about it. The scripture says that Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him: “God forbid Lord. No such thing shall ever happen to you.”

E. On the one hand, Jesus rewards Peter for making such an astounding profession of faith and gives him the power to forgive sins, but this power cannot have full force until the Redeemer dies on a cross.

F. The word used here for what Peter did when Jesus predicts his passion is eerily similar to what the devil did to Jesus when he tempted him in the desert.

1. Literally, the word used here means that “Peter pulled Jesus to himself.” Peter grabbed him by the cloak and pulled him to himself to argue with him about his passion and death.

2. Satan would take Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and tempt him with the sovereignty of the world.

G. Granted. There is a clear difference between Peter’s motivation and that of Satan.

1. What Peter did, he did out of ignorance. He did not understand that suffering is a part of life, but our Lord makes the suffering of this life a means to eternal happiness.

2. What Satan did, he did with the intention to deceive and destroy.

H. We know Jesus could never lose the argument, but if St. Peter had won the argument and had convinced Jesus not to die on the cross, would there have been any difference between what Satan did and what Peter did?

I. Fortunately, our Lord won the argument and so he rebukes Peter: "Get behind me Satan. You are thinking not as God does but as humans do."

1. He further clarifies that everyone will have a cross in this life, but the difference in a Christian is that they take up that cross out of love for Christ.

2. "Everyone who wishes to come after me, must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."

3. Jesus' world view is dramatically different from the world view we usually hear in the news.

II. We spoke last week about how our faith should inform our actions and how we are inspired to be virtuous people by high ideals and examples.

III. Our faith should inform our actions.

A. What we believe influences the way we act.

B. If Jesus thought that he would not save the world by dying on the cross then would he have done it?

C. If St. Peter had believed and understood Jesus' prediction of his passion and death, then would he have tried to convince Jesus to spare his life?

D. We must remember that St. Peter himself would end by giving his life for his faith in Jesus Christ.

IV. The purpose of our faith is to make us holy.

- A. We spoke about the letter which Pope Pius XI wrote and had smuggled into Nazi Germany and which was read from every pulpit in that fascist nation.**
- B. We spoke about how we are inspired and moved to live virtuous lives ourselves by the heroic example of the saints who gave their lives defending the faith and the rights of the human person.**
- C. We might think of St. Maximillian Kolbe who gave his life for the father of a family in a concentration camp.**
- D. Father Miguel Pro who gave his life for the freedom of the Mexican people to practice their faith.**
- E. Father Titus Bradsma who as a newspaper man who stood up for his ability to publish the faith when the free press had been shut down.**
- F. Edith Stein, St. Theresa Benedicta of the cross. St. Gianna Berretta Molla. St. Rita of Cascia.**

G. The list goes on and on and on...

H. We can think of others like St. Thomas Moore or St. John Fisher who died defending the indissolubility of the marriage bond and the freedom of the Church to pastor her faithful.

I. We can think of St. Thomas Becket who defended the autonomy of the Church in political affairs and her ability to exercise her authority apart from the interference of the government.

V. When a highly public person who professes to be a Catholic makes an erroneous statement about the doctrinal teaching of the Church, it is very important that it be corrected in an equally public way.

A. No one can force another to believe the teaching of the Church.

B. But I, as your pastor, can inform you what that teaching is.

VI. Unfortunately this is what I feel I need to do today. I want to make clear that what I am speaking of here is a public statement about the teaching of the Catholic Church which directly affects our moral life. Many will try to say that this is a political speech; however, it is the exact opposite of politics in that it is all about right conduct and the person of whom I speak no one here could ever vote for.

VII. In an appearance last Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi responded to the question about when life begins, *"I would say that as an ardent, practicing Catholic, this is an issue that I have studied for a long time. And what I know is over the centuries, the doctors of the church have not been able to make that definition . . . St. Augustine said at three months. We don't know. The point is, is that it shouldn't have an impact on the woman's right to choose."*

VIII. The problem is that the official teaching of the Church is not what speaker Pelosi said it was: "Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law." (No. 2271)

IX. Immediately a number of bishops and Archbishops performed their role and jumped into action intending to clarify the correct teaching of the Church, Archbishop Chaput said, "Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is a gifted public servant of strong convictions and many professional skills. Regrettably, knowledge of Catholic history and teaching does not seem to be one of them."

***X. "The Christian tradition from the earliest days reveals a firm antiabortion attitude . . . The condemnation of abortion did not depend on and was not limited in any way by theories regarding the time of fetal animation. Even during the many centuries when Church penal and penitential practice was based on the theory of delayed animation, the condemnation of abortion was never affected by it. Whatever one would want to hold about the time of animation, or when the fetus became a human being in the strict sense of the term, abortion from the time of conception was considered wrong, and the time of animation was never looked on as a moral dividing line between permissible and impermissible abortion."*¹**

"Ardent, practicing Catholics will quickly learn from the historical record that from apostolic times, the Christian tradition *overwhelmingly* held that abortion was grievously evil. In the absence of modern medical knowledge, some of the Early Fathers held that abortion was homicide; others that it was tantamount to homicide; and various scholars theorized about when and how the unborn child might be animated or "ensouled." But *none* diminished the unique evil of abortion as an attack on life itself, and the early Church closely associated abortion with infanticide. In

¹ Jesuit John Connery's Abortion: *The Development of the Roman Catholic Perspective* (Loyola, 1977).

short, *from the beginning*, the believing Christian community held that abortion was always, gravely wrong.

Of course, we now know with biological certainty exactly when human life begins. Thus, today's religious alibis for abortion and a so-called "right to choose" are nothing more than that - *alibis* that break radically with historic Christian and Catholic belief. Abortion kills an unborn, developing human life. It is always gravely evil, and so are the evasions employed to justify it. Catholics who make excuses for it - whether they're famous or not - fool only themselves and abuse the fidelity of those Catholics who do sincerely seek to follow the Gospel and live their Catholic faith."²

² Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap. *Archbishop of Denver*

XI. It is interesting that from the very earliest days of the Church and even the earliest days of the Protestant Reformation, this was one item all the Christian churches could agree on. “Or to put it in the blunter words of the great Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *“Destruction of the embryo in the mother’s womb is a violation of the right to live which God has bestowed on this nascent life. To raise the question whether we are here concerned already with a human being or not is merely to confuse the issue. The simple fact is that God certainly intended to create a human being and that this nascent human being has been deliberately deprived of his life. And that is nothing but murder.”*

XII. The problem is found in the language.

A. Martin Heidegger taught that “Language is the House of Being.”

B. This means that the words we use teach us about that which is.

C. If the words we use are obscured, then our thinking is skewed and if our thinking is skewed then our understanding of reality...of that which is...is skewed.

D. What do I mean?

E. We have been very clear on certain things.

1. For example, if I told you that I personally believed that it was wrong to rob a bank, but that I thought a person should have the right to do it if they wish, you would think I was nuts.

2. If I told you that I was personally opposed to one person murdering another but that I thought it should be legal for a person to choose to kill another, you would think I was nuts.

3. For some reason, however, when a person says that they believe that they are personally opposed to abortion but they believe that a person should have the right to choose, this is somehow comprehensible.

F. What we believe informs our actions.

XIII. Some of us may erroneously believe that abortion is the compassionate choice. Abortion is not the compassionate choice. We need to walk with those who are carrying the cross not force them into a quick solution whose decision they will live with for the rest of their lives. We need to let them know that the Church is the place where they can seek forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. Encourage them to seek Christ's forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation.

XIV. Conclusion

- A. My friends, this is not a political issue. It is a moral issue.**
- B. It has to do with the life of a human being, mother and child and father.**
- C. It has to do with fostering a way of thinking that respects life and does not reduce it to a pragmatic choice.**