



**Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time A**  
**November 15, 2020**

- ◆ **Some Reflections on the Election**
- ◆ **Reflections on the Sunday Gospel**

Another very contentious election has almost come and gone. I say ‘almost’ because:

- ◆ the President has not conceded defeat. It is, of course, his right to make sure there was no foul play at any of the election sites.
- ◆ the election season continues because some Senate races were too close to call.

**The Catholic vote split down the middle**

While we can say the Catholic vote is all over the map, Catholics, by and large, tend to favor one candidate over the other. Four years ago, President Trump won the Catholic vote. Prior to that, President Obama won the Catholic vote. This year, the majority of white Catholics voted for President Trump, especially church-going Catholics. But Joe Biden won 67% of the Hispanic Catholic votes. When both groups were tallied, it seems Trump won 50% of Catholic votes and Biden won 49% of the Catholic votes. (For more information on the Catholic vote, google “8 Facts about Catholics and Politics in the U.S.”).

**Some parishioners not happy with our prayer and remarks about the election**

Last weekend, I included President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in the Prayers of the Faithful. Some people were not happy because the election had not yet been confirmed. I get it and I am sorry for any offense caused. You may have noticed a different kind of prayer this weekend.

At the end of the Sunday evening 5:30 Mass, I told about a man from a morning political show who said: “It was a great weekend for Irish Catholics!” He was referring to Biden’s election and Notre Dame’s win over Clemson. Again, some parishioners were offended. So, again, I am sorry, but my intention was not to be insensitive to people’s political sensitivities. It seems many people have been on edge as this election gets

played out. I hope you understand it is never my intention to deliberately offend, and if I do, I usually have no problem apologizing.

**Joe Biden is the second Catholic to be elected President. But 50% of Catholics are not rejoicing.**

When John F. Kennedy was elected President, it is said that 90% of Catholics voted for him. Nearly all Catholics were over-the-top happy that a Catholic had finally become President of our nation.

But much has changed since the early 60’s. Now, the Catholic vote—like the nation—is very divided, the main factor being the abortion issue. It is such a big issue that many Catholics, including many Ascension parishioners, felt that I should have encouraged everyone in Church to vote for Trump because of his opposition to abortion and also because of Biden/Harris’ pro-choice stance. Around the country, a number of pastors and a few bishops told their people that they had an obligation to vote pro-life and to therefore vote for Donald Trump.

But the majority of the bishops and pastors did not tell their people to vote on a *single* issue, but rather to look at many other important issues—life issues such as preborn life and born life, the poor, the disabled, the vulnerable elderly, racial inequality, immigration (which includes the 10 million ‘Dreamers’—most of whom came here illegally as children). In short, while protection of preborn life is *very* important, it is not the only life issue to be considered as we vote. As a result of considering many life issues and other matters, like the economy and the handling of the coronavirus (also a life issue):

- ◆ millions of dedicated church-going Catholics voted for Joe Biden.
- ◆ and millions of dedicated Catholics voted for Donald Trump.

Not only that, but a large number of good Catholics have a really difficult time understanding how any good Catholic could vote for Joe Biden because he is pro-

choice. Equally many dedicated church-going Catholics had a hard time understanding how any good Christian could vote for Donald Trump because of the ‘character issue.’

I know wonderful people in our parish who are on both sides of this political divide. You probably know families who are divided politically. I believe what we are all called to do is to take a deep breath and *respect* the position of other people. Better still, it would be good if we could be open enough to listen to why others voted the way they did. As a registered Independent, I find this a relatively easy thing to do.

### **Is it right to call Joe Biden a ‘fake Catholic’?**

If you did not vote for Joe Biden, perhaps you can ask yourself if you consider him a ‘fake Catholic.’ The main reason Catholics call Joe Biden a ‘fake Catholic’ is his position on abortion. I have often said that I am very disappointed that Biden moved away from being a supporter of the *Hyde Amendment* (no federal dollars for abortion).

If Joe Biden is a ‘fake Catholic’ given his pro-choice position, it follows that almost 50% of card-carrying Catholics are ‘fake Catholics’ because 50% of Catholics are pro-choice. If a pro-choice position makes one a ‘fake Catholic,’ we can ask what other choices or behaviors may cause people to deserve the title ‘fake Catholic’ or ‘fake Christian.’ For example, does the President’s manner of speech mean that he is a ‘fake Christian’? What about greed, constant judgment of people’s characters, racist tendencies? There is a good chance that most, if not all of us, are ‘Cafeteria Catholics,’ that is, we pick and choose what we want to believe, and reject or ignore what we do not want to embrace. Rather than calling Joe Biden a ‘fake Catholic’ or Donald Trump a ‘fake Christian,’ we would be better off looking into our own hearts to see if there is anything fake about our alignment with the Gospel of Jesus.

### **Pro-choice versus pro-abortion**

Is there a difference between being pro-choice and pro-abortion? Maybe not. Having said that, I would think a large number of pro-choice Catholics, including Joe Biden, do not deem that abortion is a good way to deal with an unwanted pregnancy. But on the other hand, they do not want to force a woman into resorting to an illegal and unsafe “Back Alley” abortion. Every abortion is very tragic for the pre-born child and very sad—maybe tragic—for the mother and for all others involved. Anything that can be done should be done by both parties, and by the Church, to reduce the numbers.

Now that we have a strong majority of pro-life Justices on the Supreme Court, it will be interesting to see how they will deal with future abortion issues. One would say that the Roe decision should be overturned in the next year or two. If it is not, what would that say about the presence of six pro-life Justices on the Supreme Court?

### **Going forward, can we heal the division in our nation and work together for the common good?**

When we ask about the cause of the current spirit of divisiveness in our nation, it is easy to see that there is enough blame to go around beginning at the top.

The way leaders speak makes a huge difference. President Trump’s manner of speech about his opponents may have cost him the election. Having said that, I would hope that all would also recognize his many achievements at home and abroad.

The press is a huge reason for divisiveness in our nation. It is a pity that many good people tune in to newscasters who daily love to say *nasty* things about the President and now about Joe Biden. Some, if not several of them, are Catholic. Thankfully, there are a few newscasters who really try to be fair and avoid nasty, demeaning talk. Currently, three of my favorites are Michael Smerconish, Chris Wallace and Martha McCallum.

For two years, Congress tried hard to get rid of the President. It will be interesting to see how they treat Joe Biden once he is in office. It will be interesting to see how the Senate will treat him if the Republicans remain in the majority. Actually, if the Republicans hold a slim majority, it may be a good thing because it may force the President and the Senate to work together. That way, a Republican Senate may save Joe Biden from having to deal with huge pressure from the left wing of his party.

Finally, when it comes to healing our nation, we have our part to play. Every time *we speak* in a nasty way about people who think differently from us, we are guilty of contributing to the division in our nation, and this must stop. Each of us should ask what role, if any, we play in continuing the spirit of divisiveness in our nation.

### **“Go-Getters” for God**

Reflecting on this Sunday’s Gospel about the use of the talents God has given us, Patricia Sanchez writes:

We all know them—the “go-getters” who take an idea and run with it through the ups and downs of life

until they achieve success. Our shared human story is made so much more interesting by these people who have started small and finished big, all because they were bold enough to risk whatever was necessary to realize their goals. Some of these “go-getters,” such as David Thomas (Wendy’s), David Edgerton and James McLamore (Burger King) and Ray Kroc (McDonald’s) took a concept like “fast food” and made it what many find to be a “necessity” of life. Most of these entrepreneurs share similar stories. Like Glen Bell, Jr., the founder of Taco Bell, who grew up in poverty and rode the rails during the Great Depression, most have overcome considerable obstacles before finding themselves numbered among Fortune’s 500. As Bell put it, “it is possible to have humble beginnings and, through hard work, to succeed beyond your wildest dreams.” But what is it that enabled these “giants” of industry to accomplish their purpose? How did they succeed where so many others have failed?

What, for example, made Abraham Lincoln continue to pursue a career in public service after two failures in business, eight defeats at various runs for public office, a nervous breakdown and the loss of a sweetheart to death? What would cause a person to continue to follow studies in science after being labeled a “misfit” by his teachers and “abnormal” by his parents because he had not learned to read by age 9? What would make him persevere after miserably failing his college entrance exams? Fortunately, these obstacles did not deter the man whom the world would later know and admire as Albert Einstein.

What, for that matter, would account for the disparity in the success rate of the servants featured in today’s Gospel? Therein, the Matthean Jesus tells of three persons who were entrusted by their employer with a share of money—each, as we are told, “according to his ability.” While two invested and recouped the employer’s money as well as a sizeable profit, the third took the route of the ostrich and buried the money, as well as any hope of a profit, in the ground. What made this third person fail where the others succeeded? Was it fear? Was it a lack of gumption? Was it laziness, as the employer’s angry words appeared to suggest? Or was the servant simply unwilling to become as fully invested in his employer’s business as his employer had intended?

This servant called “worthless” and the others who are called “industrious,” “reliable” and “dependable” provide the lesson today for Jesus’ disciples. As sharers in the “business” of Jesus, i.e., of preaching and teaching the good news of salvation by word and example, we are called to be risk-takers who choose to commit ourselves to the cause of truth and justice and peace. While it may be safer to bury or to hold tight the good news that has

been invested in us, we are challenged to be daring in its promulgation. We are to take it with us to people and to places that may not afford us welcome. We are to dare to speak its message even where and when it shall be deemed unpopular, unwanted or passé.

[Used with permission, *The Word We Celebrate: Commentary on the Sunday Lectionary—Years A, B, C*, by Patricia Sanchez—Sheed & Ward Publisher, 9-1-89.]

Reflecting on today’s Gospel, Fr. Flor McCarthy states:

Once a reunion took place of the past pupils of a famous school run by a religious order. An elderly priest, who came back for the reunion, found himself surrounded by a host of former pupils. It was obvious from the way they flocked to him that he enjoyed great respect among them.

He received them with graciousness. Then, without the slightest prompting from him, they began to pour out their stories. One was an architect who had designed a number of public buildings. Another was a university professor who had written several learned books. Another was the head of a business company that had branches in over a dozen countries. Another was a highly successful farmer. Another was a Monsignor in the Church. Another was the principal of a very prestigious school. And so it went on.

The old priest listened with pleasure to the impressive litany of successes and achievements. There didn’t seem to be any failures or losers among them, or if there were, they hadn’t shown up at the reunion.

As they told their stories, the priest nodded his head and smiled. When they had finished, he complimented them on their achievements. Then, looking at them with affection, he said, “And now, tell me what you have made of yourselves?”

“What do you mean?” they asked, puzzled.

“You have told me how you did in your careers. Now tell me how you have done in your personal lives?”

A long silence followed.

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Have a blessed week,

