



## Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time C October 6, 2019

- ◆ **Respect Life Sunday**
- ◆ **The Mustard Seed of Faith**

Today across our nation, our Church reminds us of our call to respect life from womb to tomb. This is a multi-pronged issue involving various aspects of life (listed below).

- ◆ **Protection for the life of the unborn child.** In the Democratic debates, I would love it if the following questions are asked of the candidates on stage:
  - When do you believe life begins?
  - If life begins in the womb, why would it be right to take the life of an unborn child?

Then there is the issue in some states where a child born alive after a botched abortion can be killed and thrown in a garbage bag. Pretty horrific and pretty hard to believe that any educated person with an ounce of morality could vote for this.

### **Prolife involves more than the protection of the unborn.**

Some people, correctly it seems, accuse proliferers of being concerned *only* about the life of the unborn child. As a church, we speak of the sacredness of human life from womb to tomb. But this involves *many* issues on which even good people may differ on their approach.

- ◆ **World hunger.** Thousands, maybe millions, of children and adults die everyday of hunger. Million others are malnourished. Related to this is the issue of countless people living in dire poverty.
- ◆ **Human trafficking** is rampant even in our country. Millions of children and women as well as some men are used for prostitution and slave labor.
- ◆ **Sexual, emotional, and physical abuse of children.** We all know the sad and awful history of such crimes involving clergy.
- ◆ **Domestic violence.** Many children and women, and some men, are victims of domestic violence. A lot of women are actually murdered in their own homes.
- ◆ **Euthanasia** or so-called 'mercy killing' is now legal in some countries, including in some of our states.

- ◆ **Abuse of the elderly** in their own homes and in nursing care facilities.
- ◆ **Capital Punishment.** Until fairly recently, our Catechism taught that the death penalty was warranted in some situations. Recently, though, Pope Francis has said that it should *never* be allowed. This is one of the life issues that Catholics disagree on.

There are, of course, many other life issues. And while we may not have room in our *schedule* for *some* of them, we should have room in our *hearts* for *all* of them. Ideally, we stand for life from womb to tomb.

For facts and figures relating to the frequency of abortion in the United States, see Guttmacher Institute (AGI) report at [www.abort73.com/abortion\\_facts/us\\_abortion\\_statistics/](http://www.abort73.com/abortion_facts/us_abortion_statistics/)

### *A Prayer for Life*

*Loving God, Creator of all,  
we recognize that life is a gift from you.  
Open our hearts to your Holy Spirit  
and renew in us a deep respect for all persons:  
the family, the unborn, the young, the adult,  
the sick, the disabled, the abused, the imprisoned,  
the aged, the dying, the homeless, the unemployed,  
and the oppressed in any way.*

*Bless all of us and instill in us  
a deep love for your gift of life.*

*Through the intercession of Mary, Mother and Virgin,  
may all our words and actions  
foster reverence for human life.*

*May we be true witnesses to the truth  
that all life is precious and has sublime dignity.*

*Lead our nation and our world to this understanding  
so that we may be a people dedicated  
to the protection of all your sons and daughters.*

*We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ,  
the Word Who became flesh and lived among us.*

## A Mustard Seed of Faith

Reflecting on today's Gospel, Fr. Flor McCarthy writes:

*In today's Gospel Jesus says that a grain of authentic faith (perfect trust in God) can achieve great things. The saying about the uprooting of a tree is not to be taken in a literal sense. It is a vivid eastern mode of expression, which means that with faith, what looks impossible can become possible.*

*It is impossible to exaggerate the value of faith. They are very fortunate people who are born into a religious faith, and who with the passage of the years find this faith increasingly strong and sustaining. To possess a confident faith is a tremendous blessing. Only faith can answer the most profound questions of life.*

*Without faith, there is no reason for anything and nothing is in its proper place. Life is unintelligible and unbearable without God. Faith gives meaning to life. Faith also gives vision. A life without vision is like a night without stars.*

*But we mustn't expect faith to clear everything up. Just because we believe doesn't mean we have all the answers. But we don't need to know all the answers. Faith is trust, not certainty. And faith doesn't shield us from the hard knocks of life or death. Faith keeps us going in difficult times.*

*Walter Cizek, a Polish Jesuit priest, spent 15 years in forced labour camps in Siberia. Through all those years he belonged to the lowest brigades, forced to do the dirtiest work—digging foundations by hand, loading and unloading heavy construction materials, crawling in damp, dark mines, where death was only one careless step away.*

*What was it that kept him going? He says, "People died in the camps especially when they gave up hope. But I trusted in God, and so I never felt without hope. It was not I who kept the faith; it was the faith that kept me."*

*Happy the one who possesses a faith like that. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."*

*It's an exaggeration to make a point. What he is saying is: with faith what looks impossible becomes possible. Faith has given people the strength to endure the seemingly impossible. If people keep the faith, the faith will keep them.*

*Jesus is not saying that if we have a genuine, strong faith we will always get what we want, or accomplish what we want. Clearly this doesn't happen. But faith*

*does move mountains in the sense that it helps us to cope with impossible situations.*

*It's not the size of it but the quality of it that matters. Mahatma Gandhi said, "Those with a grain of faith never lose hope."*

*All of us can make our own the prayer of the apostles: "Lord, increase our faith." We also need to heed the words of Paul to Timothy: "Fan into a flame the gift that God gave you."*

*We need to fan into a flame the spark of faith we got in baptism. It is not enough to keep the faith; we have to grow in it. Faith grows through prayer and contact with the believing community. It's hard to be a believer on one's own. This is where the community comes in. The community is a support group for believers.*

*But, great and all as faith is, it is not enough in itself. We need love too. And love is even more powerful than faith. While faith makes all things possible, love makes all things easy.*

### **Rose Kennedy valued the gift of faith about all things.**

*Rose Kennedy was the mother of the Kennedy clan, which included John Kennedy who went on to become President of the United States. She was a woman of great faith. And how she needed that faith. She saw two of her sons assassinated.*

*Speaking about faith, she said in an interview on one occasion: "I have come to the conclusion that the most important element in human life is faith. If God were to take away all the blessings, wealth, intelligence, and leave me with just one gift, I would ask for faith—because with faith in God, in his goodness, mercy, love for me, and belief in everlasting life, I believe I could still be happy, trustful, leaving all to God's inscrutable providence."*

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Have a blessed week,

