

THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: October: Respect Life & Social Justice Month

Every year, October is designated by the Catholic Church as “Respect Life Month”. It is an opportunity to focus attention on issues in our culture which touch on the basic foundation of all Catholic social teaching: the “dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God”. The Second Vatican Council of the 1960’s called all of us Christians to “read the signs of the times” in each age in order to ascertain what issues in the culture are most pressing to respond to, to draw attention to, and to be a “prophetic voice” regarding, as disciples of Jesus Christ. Vatican II called all laity, especially, to work to address these cultural issues that harm the dignity of the human person, by living and bearing witness to the Gospel in their own homes, workplaces, in civic/governmental life, social circles, etc. While the Catholic Church does not exist primarily to be simply another “social service agency” (many atheists can do a great job in that realm, too), the Church (clergy and laity) does have a duty to witness to the reasons why certain cultural practices should be encouraged and why others should be prevented. And those reasons, again, can be boiled down to the basic principle: *What will honor and respect the truth that all human persons (no matter how young or old nor life circumstance) have inherent dignity as created in the image and likeness of God?*

This is the proper context of all “social justice” work within the Church and society. Social justice involves not only the perennial issues that Jesus said “will always be with us” - poverty, homelessness, hunger, sickness, etc. Indeed, these are always essential social issues, and, as a priest, I have always supported these causes. In fact, I grew up in a rural family under the “poverty line” (my father was disabled from the polio epidemic of years ago). So, I have tried to be active in helping the needy, including serving at food pantries (such as the one here in Ada last month), and even living for four years with a public food pantry located in my personal basement when I was pastor in Logan (not always a convenient arrangement, to say the least).

But “social justice” also involves many other issues which, when we follow Vatican II’s advice and “read the signs of the times”, we must admit have become much worse over the past few decades. After years of listening to countless lay people who have suffered from these worsening issues, I have become convinced that we do need to focus more of our attention on alleviating the suffering of those who have been affected. For example, it pains me to see the internal suffering brought on by those who have regretted their abortions (which I witnessed as I worked with women in the Bethesda Healing Ministry), because our society allows this violation to human dignity to take place; or to see the suffering of teens and adults from addictions to pornography because of the rise of the internet and the unjust multi-billion dollar industry that this involves; or to see broken and hurt marriages, suffering families and children because of the confusion about the true, positive meaning of sexuality throughout our pop culture, thanks to Hollywood, MTV, and the “free love” attitudes from the sexual revolution. These are all “social justice” issues, too, because they pertain to the dignity of human persons. They are but a few of the “signs of the times” that we must “read” and respond to in love and truth as Christians who desire to remain relevant in an ever-changing, more challenging world.

To help us remain relevant, I have included in today’s bulletin, and in upcoming bulletins throughout this “Respect Life Month”, a series of inserts issued by our U.S. Bishops. I hope they are of help.

Fr. Ferguson is available to help you with any questions or concerns you may have; please contact him at hamilton.college@outlook.com or at 419-634-2626.

THOUGHTS FOR OUR PARISH CHILDREN by “Jackie”, the Pastor’s Cat



Hi boys and girls! My name is “Jackie”, and as you know, I am Father Ferguson’s cat! I was a naughty cat last week. That’s right! I went outside one night, and Father told me to come back soon. But I had so much fun running around the neighborhood, that it was 1:00 in the morning before I came back! Boy, Father was mad. He grounded me. I didn’t like that, and at first I growled at him. But then he explained that he wanted me to obey him because he loves me and wants to keep me safe. Have you ever been mad at your parents for making you obey them? Maybe they are trying to protect you! This week, thank your parents for how much they love you! Have a “purr”-fect week!