

SERMON ON CATHOLICISM & POLITICS

Fr. Dave Heney

The Gospel tells of a poor man named Lazarus in Heaven and a rich man in Hell, yet it doesn't say why the rich man is condemned. The rich man does not harm Lazarus, insult, hit, or harm him in any way. In fact, the rich man does not interact with Lazarus at all!Perhaps that is the problem. Perhaps the rich man never even notices a poor man right in front of his door. He simply does not know what is going on, and does not get involved. Knowing what and who is at our door is important. The stakes are eternal life. Politicians, issues, and initiatives are, in a sense, "at our front door and in our neighborhood." As Catholics we must be aware of the needs of the people around us. Catholics can never be "spectators."

Catholics use a three part system that helps to know what to do. We **study** the issues. We pay attention to speeches, reports, and the news. We weigh all the pros and cons and **judge** what is right and wrong. We are called to make judgments, but not be pre-judgmental or prejudiced. That is why study is so important. Finally, we **act**. In an election year, action means voting. Catholics get involved by serious study, judgment, and action. Catholics are never spectators of life.

So many issues are complicated, or "close calls." We have a pamphlet available for your consideration outside after mass that lists five of the most central issues that are clear and that we can say are always right or always wrong. From these arise the basis for deciding the other more complicated issues. You don't have to take it but it is there for your thoughtful review.

There are many more issues we could discuss, such as helping the poor, the war in Iraq, creating jobs, healthcare, or fighting terrorism. The church has moral goals for each but how they are accomplished is your call. For example, Catholics agree to help the poor. But good Catholics can differ sincerely on how to do it, such as whether taxes or the minimum wage should rise or fall. Catholics are for peace, but good people will differ on whether to use force or not to secure peace. Most of these are judgment calls on how to achieve a common goal. The church respects everyone will

study, judge, and act well on *how* to accomplish our common goals of peace, jobs, health, and helping the poor.

My problem is that I am not an economist, soldier, or diplomat. I don't have special expertise. That is why I try to study as many direct sources as I can. I certainly don't depend solely on knowing my faith from the LA Times! I do have expertise in one area. I say Mass a lot. I say the words of Jesus Christ, Himself, at the consecration. "This is my entire self, (body & blood) and I am for you!" Jesus does not qualify His words. It is not "I am for the talented, or Americans, or rich, poor, young, or old. He says, "I am for you!" "You" is not qualified. God got involved with us and sent His Son who is deeply and unconditionally involved with all life.

If Jesus is for life, than so am I. If Jesus is for all life, whether it is very old and sick, or young and healthy, or a small cluster of cells, or even before it is born, or a single mother, then so am I. Catholics are for the life of the unborn *and* a mother in crisis, wanting both to have a full life. Catholics also look forward to research and cures from stem cells; those powerful cells that come from many sources, just not from the death of a child. The stakes are enormous. They are eternal life.

I see that same dedication at Baptisms: all this attention for babies with no jobs! They are deeply loved simply because they are, simply because they exist. *There are other issues, like war and the economy, but our answers to most arise first from our attitude to life itself. If Jesus is pro-life: than so am I!*

No one candidate or issue anywhere probably lives up to the commitment of Jesus to all innocent life. (and Jesus is not running for office). Common sense simply says, as the pamphlet makes clear, to support the one that comes closest to supporting life and our overall moral tradition.

I invite you to get involved at Mass, feel the words of Consecration, and feel Our Lord's dedication to your life. I invite you to come to our Adoration Chapel and contemplate Our Lord in the Eucharist, His real presence that shows His commitment to all life. There are tables outside to pick up the pamphlet as well as sign up for an hour of prayer in the Chapel in front of our Lord who is so deeply committed to you. If Jesus is for life, then so am I!

"I am Fr. Dave Heney, and I approved this message!