

6 Easter C SML 2019  
JN 14:23-29

This evening/morning's gospel finds our Blessed Lord at the Last Supper, five times telling his disciples about the Holy Spirit. To describe the works of the Holy Spirit, the two words used most often are love and truth. Of the five times Our Blessed Lord tells of the Holy Spirit, three times He said the Holy Spirit is truth:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth.” (JN 14:16)

“When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.” (JN 15:26)

“But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, we will guide you to all truth.” (JN 16:13)

Always speak correctly. Tell the truth. Otherwise you lose your credibility. It's the age old lesson of the boy who cried “Wolf!” Tell the truth.

In response to last weekend's sign on St. Mary of the Lakes lawn, which I program, that read, “God Bless Alabama

Legislators,” there has been much vitriol on social media against St. Mary of the Lakes and me. The Catholic Church across America has been praying for legislators to reverse their abortion laws since Roe v. Wade. Those prayers are now being answered in several states as of late, and there is wicked, and I mean wicked backlash from the pro death community. They are showing their true colors.

I’m not on social media. Most of social media is anonymous and therefore much of social media is shadowboxing and I do not have time to shadow box. I have no time for the anonymous who are cowards and are not man or woman enough to show their face.

Most of the pro death, pro choice community realize they cannot defend the argument that abortion is the direct killing of innocent life. Therefore they will lie their way around abortion by saying a fetus is not a human person, which science has discredited. They will argue a woman has a right to do what she wants with her body, which is correct. However, no one has the right to destroy another’s human body, which is the direct outcome of every abortion. I agree a mother who has conceived through rape or incest has

been gravely violated. But two wrongs never make a right. Abortion is an intrinsic evil, which means there would never be a time when abortion is a moral option. A mother cannot kill her baby. Period. That mother needs to stand up a saint and a heroine and deliver the baby. The mother can give her baby up for adoption. There is a long long list of parents praying for a baby to come their way through adoption.

This argument stands on its own. The pro death community knows it. Since they cannot fight the message they will attempt to discredit the messenger, in St. Mary of the Lakes' case, by bringing up the sins of the past.

Some of the vitriol speaks of the grave sins of 30 years ago committed by Father Tumang. His actions were publicly condemned by Bishop Reiss, civil authorities and our parishioners were outraged. No one excused him. The vitriol speaks of the grave sin of Father LaForge, the pastor at the time, who used parish funds to fly Father Tumang out of the country. His actions were also condemned by Bishop Reiss, civil authorities and our parishioners were outraged. No one excused him. The Bishop immediately removed him as pastor of St. Mary of the Lakes and he was indicted. There

was no cover up. This was front page news in the Burlington County Times. Everyone in the Church agrees it was scandalous. No one condoned their actions. Their actions do not reflect on us. They reflect on them.

However, these scandalous actions of 30 years ago do not change the message of St. Mary of the Lakes today. Because our message is true and the truth does not change. It's the famous quote, "The truth is still the truth, even if no one believes it. A lie is still a lie, even if everyone believes it." Therefore St. Mary of the Lakes' message cannot change. We are undeniably pro life.

Two women were on our front lawn on Tuesday afternoon. One of our employees thought they needed help so she went out to them. She was cursed at six inches from her nose in language I will not repeat from the pulpit. My employee responded in the same way the woman who was praying outside Planned Parenthood in Center City responded. She said, "I'm going to pray for you," which only incensed her all the more. My employee came into my office visibly shaking so I went out to meet with them. They said I had no right to pray for legislators and put that on a sign and

I disagreed. They said I yelled at them. **What I used is the tone of voice I am using right now. I did not yell, but I was firm.** I have three witnesses. I told both women that the police were on their way and to allow the police to decide if I did anything wrong. Both women immediately left. They have been served warnings by the police not to return to SML. If they do, they will be arrested for trespassing.

One Facebook post accused me of being misogynistic citing my Mother's Day homily comparing mothers raising children to building cathedrals. The congregation applauded after that homily. I received more than a few thank you emails for my Mother's Day homily in the days that followed.

Several posts accused me of violating the separation of church and state. Separation of church and state prohibits a church run government and a government run church. Period. Separation of church and state does not prohibit our praying for government legislators.

Others accused me of violating our tax exempt status. Having tax exempt status does not reduce or take away one's right to free speech, or in this case, free prayer. Anyone who would like to read a thorough understanding of

the separation of church and state is encouraged to read Archbishop Chaput's Render Unto Caesar. After you do, you will be in a better position to speak the truth.

Some have accused me of making abortion a political issue, that I'm doing this for the votes. I'm not running for office. Abortion is a moral issue not a political issue. And it is my responsibility to teach on all matters of faith and morals.

Still others have accused me of dividing our community. My sign was a peaceful prayer. Their vitriolic response was divisive.

Others have accused me of condemning women who have had abortion. I am a Project Rachel chaplain and as such, women are encouraged to meet with me who have had abortions to be absolved and counseled. To listen to women who have had abortions speak of their deep seated pain and their deep seated regret is one of my saddest ministries as a priest. At the same time, to offer them absolution and God's forgiveness is one of my most rewarding ministries as a priest.

SML may suffer a hit. The oxymoronic pro choice/pro death Catholics may leave, which was predicted in John

Chapter 15 where Jesus says that we will be pruned so we can bear more fruit, and where Jesus predicted that we will be hated because of Him. (15:28) Acts 5:41 says the Apostles were proud to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI predicted a smaller, more faithful Church. The list of support in scripture and among Church greats goes on and on.

I informed parishioners at both daily Masses on Wednesday what had transpired on Tuesday and what is being posted on Facebook. More than a few came into the sacristy and asked how they can help. You can help by posting on Facebook your support for SML. First, you and “Friend” and “Post” on our **smlparish** facebook page. Those of you who are Facebook friendly know what I’m talking about. These instructions will be published in next Sunday’s bulletin. But post what’s true. If you post what’s not true, it will be removed. We cannot in good conscience provide a platform for liars.

And of course you can pray. Sometimes we say, “the least I can do is pray.” I prefer to say, “the most we can do is pray.” I can only imagine the 45 million souls of babies aborted in this

country praying for our pro-life efforts, in addition to the millions of pro-life souls in heaven whose mothers chose life for them.

Last Friday night at 5:00 p.m. there were supposed to be protesters in front of the Church. They never came. We were at the ready inside Church making a holy hour. I am grateful to approximately 100 adorers of the Blessed Sacrament who came to pray. Friday night is in the Top Five memories of my time at SML.

In a few minutes, we will pray the Prayer for Religious Liberty for situations just like this one. The Church has the right to speak the truth and we will not be denied that right. Also, after the noon Mass, I ask all available parishioners to return to Church to pray a Rosary. We will be in and out in 20 minutes but it will be 20 minutes praying Mary's most powerful weapon, the Rosary.

And given the evil vitriol that is in our community, we have much work to do to bring the peace of Jesus Christ to more of Medford. Not the world's peace which is obviously not peaceful at all. As Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (JN 14:27)

I'll close my homily with four quotes:

1. One is St. Teresa of Calcutta's most famous quotes: “It is a poverty to decide that a child must die so that you may live as you wish.”
2. The second is a quote from one of the greatest Catholic preachers in American History, Bishop Fulton Sheen. Sheen said he preferred to live in times when the Church had suffered rather than thrived, when the Church had to struggle, when the Church had to go against the culture. For it was then that real men and real women stood up and were counted. “Even dead bodies can float downstream,” Sheen said, pointing out that many people can coast when the Church is respected. “But it takes a real man, a real woman, to swim against the current.”
3. The third is from my good mother who said, “Dan they nailed Christ to the cross. What makes you think you will do any better?”
4. And the fourth is an old Irish Blessing:  
May those who love us, love us;  
And for those who don't love us,  
May God turn their hearts;  
And if He doesn't turn their hearts,  
May He turn their ankles,  
So we will know them by their limping!