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**Homily for the Eve of the Election**

St. Therese Parish - North  
Kansas City, Missouri  
November 3, 2008

***Judges 7:1-22***  
***Revelation 11:19; 12: 1-6, 10.***  
***Matthew 10: 26-33***

Dear Friends,

Over the next 24 hours, millions of Americans will go to the polls throughout our country to cast ballots for the leaders of our nation, state, and community. We will make decisions about amendments and propositions. This is a wonderful process and privilege of citizenship in a country that values the ideal of freedom.

But let us have no doubt about this: through this process we are more than participants in a democratic process. We are becoming participants in life and death. The candidates we choose do not arise merely on their own. We place them in office.

Clearly, all these leaders are imperfect men and women like ourselves. They will make decisions day by day, and many of the circumstances of war and domestic work are not able to be known until they happen. Nonetheless, when they tell us specifically what they will do and we are therefore able to foresee some of the likely consequences of their leadership we share in the responsibility of their acts. In this sense an election is about even more than physical life and death. It is also about your eternal salvation and mine. This is the first reason to pray. Pray that we will take seriously – that every other voter will take seriously – the meaning of our choices. In a country where we have made **choice** an absolute, we must remember that underlying every choice is a value; that flowing from every choice is a consequence; that we must give an accounting to God for what we decide.

Our Lord instructs us in the Gospel we have heard, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna.” The enormity of this election is founded, in part, on the radical determination of some who would lead our country deeper than ever before into the darkness of the culture of death. This is a path that would certainly mean the death of countless more innocent lives. As shepherd of this Diocese I am also deeply saddened by the prospect of the cost in people’s souls, the souls of those who would place a candidate’s promise of economic prosperity above the life of the most innocent of our brothers and sisters.

Most perilous is the fate of those Catholics who, with hardened hearts, decide to create for themselves, and preach to others, a false gospel that the “right” to an abortion must not be challenged, or that the humanity of the child need not be protected.

Most fraudulent are those Catholic leaders, or alliances of Catholics, that insist that the radically evil injustice of abortion need not be directly opposed, but rather, that somehow solving the dilemma of the poor in a sweeping act of charity will cause the foundation of this monstrous crime to crumble.

Why is this so terribly amiss? Because the foundation and cause of abortion is not poverty but a blind disregard for personal responsibility, a heinous denial and disrespect for human life, and an idolatrous worship of personal convenience. This is why even in the wealthy countries of Scandinavia the highest rates of abortions are followed by rampant euthanasia.

Friends, the poor do not hate their children any more or less than the rich. The poison of which abortion is the most dreadful manifestation is the sinful suffocation of selfishness, and it can and does affect all strata of society. Woe to those, particularly Catholics, who dare to try to convince us that their "choice" of a radically pro-abortion leader is within the parameters of conscience. God have mercy on those who exude freely this salve for their partisan cooperators. I fear that they will bear a greater responsibility than most. Against them will come not only the cry of millions of human lives savagely destroyed, but the souls of those they have sucked down with themselves. This is the very definition of scandal, and the reason that so many have spoken out with such urgency to announce the authentic teaching of the Church.

Part of the damage we have been promised is encapsulated in the Freedom of Choice Act, which has been held at bay the last eight years. When all the reasonable limits on abortion, gained in the last 35 years have been summarily swept away: parental notification, waiting periods, counseling and informed consent, the number of those killed will grow by more than 100,000 a year.

The Freedom of Choice Act will mark the beginning of a great persecution against religious liberty, because it will require tax payer money to be used for abortions. You and I will be faced with this legal trial: whether we should pay our taxes making us participants in the slaughter of Innocents or be liable for jail and fines.

And what of our Catholic hospitals? If we are forced to provide such destructive services under the Freedom of Choice Act, we will have to refuse. Catholic health care workers, and other men and women of good conscience, will risk losing their jobs when their conscience exception is lost and they are pressured to participate. I read a letter recently in our daily paper: The man said, "If you don't want an abortion. Don't have one." Under a regime of such change, you and I will not have such an easy choice. By paying, it will become "our abortion." Lord, have mercy on us, and on our country.

In the light of these clear and present dangers, I chose tonight's Gospel, in part, because four times it tells us, "Don't be afraid!" Let us not be afraid, dear flock. You are worth so much to God; more than sparrows, more than an election, more than any man can measure. Our first goal is this: we must get through tomorrow with our eternal souls intact. We know that God will take care of the rest.

A week ago, I wrote our diocese a letter hoping that it would be heard by all as a necessary call to prayer. Many of our pastors read it to their people. Some, I am sure, suffered a bit from doing so. Thank you, dear brave priests.

I also know that it wasn't heard by all. Let us not be too hard on those who, for fear or even disagreement, have shrunk back even from the call to pray! It takes time for us to learn to carry our burdens, our obedience, our responsibility. I want you all to pray that – at the hour of greatest need – none will step back from the sacrifice that makes us most like Jesus Christ.

In the first reading, God tells Gideon that He is going to win a great victory. So that Gideon and the People of Israel don't get too big a head, God determines to go against the hundreds of thousands of the enemy with only three hundred men. He even proceeds to choose those who are perhaps the least sophisticated of all, "those who lap up their water like dogs." God certainly doesn't pull any punches!

St. Paul says something similar when he announces that God chooses those whom the world considers foolish to shame the wise. (1 Cor 1:27) Dear friends, there is hope for us! God can use us – few and unsophisticated as we are to win the victory of life. God can choose "the lowly and despised of

the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something.” (1 Cor 1: 28)

I pray this reading from about Gideon's lopsided battle will remind God and us of the kind of victory He can win for His people. May He grant us this same mercy these days, all in accord with His will and plan; all for the glory of His name; all for the protection of human life.

In the second reading we have the image of Mary, the Woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and the crown of stars on her head. Mary, we cry out to you, O Mother of life, O Empress of America, O Star of the New Evangelization, O Immaculate patroness of our Diocese and our country: Gather us under the mantel of your maternal love. Mary, Lady of the Rosary whom we have invoked so often, particularly in the last month, “Pray for us sinners!” You, O Queen and our Mother, “despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever-glorious and blessed Virgin.

Dear friends, over the next 24 hours, millions of Americans will go to the polls throughout our country to cast ballots for the leaders of our nation, state, and community. We are called to be participants in life and death. May God guide us to choose life. May He make us his fearless apostles, and use us to construct a civilization of life and love.