

## Homily for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Perhaps some of you got to see on TV the inauguration of our new president, which took place this past Friday. And whether you voted for Donald Trump or not, it's still an amazing ceremony to consider. For me, presidential inaugurations are kind of like the Olympics – it's an event when everyone comes together for a common cause, and you can be especially proud to be American. The Inauguration is so amazing because of the peaceful transfer of power taking place in the most powerful country in the world. And it's easy to take for granted. But, numerous other countries are not as blessed as we are to have such a reality.

And yet, as much as this is supposedly the peaceful transition of power – I'm beginning to question that. On Friday, over 200 people were arrested at so-called protests for outright violence – throwing rocks and bottles, breaking through windows of nearby businesses, setting vehicles and garbage cans on fire. Sounds to me more like riots than protests – and these were clearly not peaceful.

But much more amazing than the Inauguration is how the Scriptures, which are the living Word of God, speak to us in ways ever new. For example, in the first reading from Isaiah, which include the verses leading up to that passage we normally hear on Christmas Eve: “For every boot that tramped in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for fire. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.” Wow, really speaks to that protest situation, doesn't it?

Now, I'm not trying to compare President Trump to the Christ Child – please, that is not my intention. Rather, it is Jesus Himself who is the answer for the disagreement, the discord, and the violence that pervaded too much of the world back then, and too much of our own world and our own country today. Jesus alone, as the Son of God, is the Prince of Peace.

Interestingly enough when I was listening to Trump's Inaugural Address, I heard him speak the following words: "When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice. The Bible tells us, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity." We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity."

Unity. Isn't it just amazing that this is the theme of our second reading today from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians?! Paul writes, "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose. For it has been reported to me about you...that there are rivalries among you. I mean that each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ.""

It's so easy for us to label – Republican, Democrat, liberal, conservative, progressive, traditional. But the truth is that we are all children of God. And it's when we all look in the same direction that we cease to look across and against one another. And isn't that what happens when we come to Mass to worship God? Throughout the world, men and women, old and young, saints and sinners, Republicans and Democrats gather together in churches week in and week out to focus on the living God – we humans, who sit in darkness, come to together to see a great light.

Now, in politics, we can have prudential disagreements about the best way to approach civil issues – taxes, health care, job creation, and the like. These are the topics that are truly open to debate, which is the role of government. But by realizing that we are all children of the same God who desire life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we root ourselves in this fundamental truth we share as we have our conversations and disagreements.

However, there are topics, which are not up for negotiation – not because they're part of one party's political platform and not the other, but because of truth, revealed to us plain and simple by God. Life is a sacred gift. And innocent human life must never be taken no matter what the rationale. Roe v. Wade may be the law of the Land, but it is not the Law of God.

And this coming Friday – several days delayed because of the Inauguration – our parish will join hundreds of thousands of others for the 44<sup>th</sup> annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. January 22<sup>nd</sup> is the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. And this Monday, is the observed day that the U.S. Bishops have decreed as a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. From 12 noon to 3pm on Monday, the church will be open for silent prayer before our Eucharistic Lord, and will conclude with the praying of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. I know many of you cannot come on Friday, and many of you work on Monday. But in some way, please pray, fast, maybe even give alms, for the legal protection of unborn children. With the pro-life majority in Congress and the White House, there is increasing support for pro-life appointments to the Supreme Court. And through prayer, all things are possible, through Christ who strengthens us. God bless you.