

SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE
FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL



Icon of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

Congratulations!

to all those celebrating the civil holiday of
“Mother’s Day” – mothers, grandmothers,
mothers-in-law, godmothers –

Многая і Благая Літа!

Many Blessed Years!

Mother’s Day Remembrance

*The Flowers for each mother today at the
Liturgy are given in memory of Marsha
Lashchuk, the mother of Olga Miller.*

*Leave all human injustices to the Lord, for
God is the Judge, but as for yourself, be
diligent in loving everyone with a pure
heart, and remember that you yourself
are a sinner and in need of God’s mercy.*

– St. John of Kronstadt

*The Christian ideal has not been tried and
found wanting; it has been found difficult
and left untried.*

– G. K. Chesterton

*Christians had defeated the greatest empire in the history of mankind
without carrying weapons. They carried love, they carried goodness, and
they carried the word. That is the difficult path. The easy path would be to
kill and slaughter. The difficult path is to change yourself and enhance your
morals so you can change others.*

– Metropolitan Paul (Yazigy)

He is the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo who along with Youhanna (Ibrahim), the Syriac Orthodox bishop of Aleppo was kidnapped on April 23 by Islamists in Syria. Their driver, a deacon was martyred during the abduction. Please pray for both bishops safety and release!

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Thanks to Kerry Hodgkinson

02-01-2013

**IF GOD CREATED ALL THIS DOES HE HAVE TO
PAY THE ELECTRIC BILL TOO?**

THOUGHTS ON STEWARDSHIP

From Parish Publishing, LLC

All of us are caretakers. Nothing belongs to us; everything belongs to God. Not all men and women realize this, but Christians do and strive to please God in the use of all that God has put in their care. Yes, you are a caretaker... God’s caretaker!

Think of time as a priceless gift; develop an awareness of its incomparable value and examine your conscience in this light. Are you using your time according to God’s plan, or are you throwing it away? If tomorrow were never to dawn, what would you do for God today?

Evangelical Pastor: How does the church justify the sin of silence on abortion?

BY ROLLEY HAGGARD
Fri May 03, 2013 10:28 EST

Pro-Life Activism Is Not a Mission of the Church. It Is THE Mission of the Church.

Now that I have your attention, permit me to explain.

There's an ongoing debate in Reformed and Evangelical circles regarding the mission of the church. That's good, because the Body of Christ needs to be clear on what the Head expects the hands and feet to be doing.

But the way one frames the question can greatly affect the answer. So we need to make sure we're rightly framing the question.

Rightly Framing the Question

More often than not, the question "What is the mission of the church?" is framed so as to give either the exclusive mission, or the comprehensive mission, rather than the primary mission. As important as the first two are, the third is, by definition, the most important.

Exclusive mission means those things that the church and the church alone has responsibility for. There is no serious debate regarding the exclusive mission of the church. All parties are pretty much agreed that the church's exclusive mission is to minister the Word of God, particularly in fulfillment of the Great Commission. If the church doesn't do that, no one else will.

Comprehensive mission means all things the church has responsibility for. The comprehensive mission of the Church is what the aforementioned debate centers on. It involves determining what things are "official" church responsibilities and what things are not.

Primary mission means those things that are the church's most important responsibilities: the things she will be held most accountable for by Christ. Unfortunately, neither side of the debate is giving much consideration to this, and, incredibly, it is falling through the cracks. Christ and His apostles laid it out so plainly it is difficult to understand how we are overlooking it, but we are.

The Church's Primary Mission

So what is the church's primary mission, her most important responsibility? Jesus

summed it up in what He called "the first and great commandment": "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). He linked it inextricably with "the second [commandment]" which He said is "like unto [the first]: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (v. 39). "On these two commandments," He asserted, "hang all the law and the prophets" (v. 40).

The apostle Paul was even more concise: "All the law," he wrote, "is fulfilled in one word . . . love. . . ."

Biblical examples of the primacy of love could be listed almost endlessly. The church's primary responsibility, collectively and individually, is to love God and people. God is pro-people and expects His body, the church, to be likewise. It is impossible to be an obedient Christian or an obedient church without loving people, for to love people for God's sake is to love God. It is hard to imagine anything being more clear. And yet.

We've Made Our Highest Priority Our Lowest

The church—the evangelical church in particular—is guilty of a spectacular sin of omission when it comes to loving people, especially the people Jesus referred to as "the least of these": those we deem least important and easiest to neglect.

No people in America better fit the description "the least of these" than pre-born babies whose mothers choose, often under pressure and with subsequent regret, to abort them. Fifty-five million murdered now makes us statistically nearly ten times worse than the Nazis. And by "us" I mean the church, because it is largely our collective silence that has enabled the butchery to continue virtually unopposed.

I'm an evangelical, and I've been asking myself for four decades, how on earth does the church justify such egregious sins of omission

as silence on abortion? The answers I've found center on the same thing: worldview. We rationalize our culpable inaction on the basis of flawed worldview.

We think we have a biblical worldview, and in many essential ways we do (that's why I'm still an evangelical). But in many other, equally essential ways, we do not. I described two examples of flawed worldview impinging on the abortion issue in previous BreakPoint articles. This whole question about the mission of the church is a third. Owing to a defective worldview on the Church's mission we have effectively made our highest priority our lowest.

The Rationale

There are at least two key aspects to the misguided rationale for our neglect of the church's primary mission, love.

First, sins of omission are easier to commit and justify than sins of commission. A study published in "Psychological Science" suggests that this is because people know others will think worse of them if they do something bad, than if they merely let something bad happen.

Second, we mistakenly think we are loving people as we ought simply by sharing the gospel with them. The church today is characterized by words without works.

True, the words we share are the words of God. But we forget that talk is cheap, and we assume that because we speak God's words our sparse actions are excusable, that our merely saying "be warmed and filled" is somehow reckoned an acceptable substitute for actually filling the need.

But even the words of God are cheap if the life dispensing them does not show the love of God it preaches. That is the whole point of James, chapter 2. We say "God is love," yet demonstrate by our self-absorbed Christianity that this means exactly nothing except "God is willing to overlook the sins of those who speak well of Jesus, act religious, and win souls."

This is not Christianity. And yet it is; it is what we have made of it. The body of Christ has more resemblance to the insular Pharisee avoiding lepers than to the unselfconscious Good Samaritan showing—not speaking,

but showing—compassion for the needy, regardless of cost.

There is no difference between one who says "be warmed and filled" and does nothing, and one who says "I'm pro-life" and does nothing. Faith without works is dead; love without action is not love.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The Church is the Church only when it exists for others." The German Evangelical Church ignored him, and innocents within the borders of the Reich were slaughtered by the trainload, without opposition. Ironically, we vilify the German Evangelical Church.

Pro-life activism is not a mission of the Church; it is the mission of the church because the mission of the church is loving people. If we are to be the Body of Christ we must care about "the least of these" as our Master did. That, or quit calling ourselves the church.

* * *

"Lord, when saw we Thee naked, an unloved fetus, and did not march, did not preach, did not vote or write letters or hold signs, did not agonize over Thee, did not advocate for Thee?"

* * *

Transfiguration

*How like this little fetus, Holy God,
You writhed, enwombed in suffocating pain,
Until sharp instruments unpumped your blood
And left your form transfigured to a stain.
How like a loving mother's natal pine
Your prayer, encrypted as a primal groan,
Umbilical from heaven's soul to mine,
Proved you unwilling to unpair your own.
How like a wand commanding miracles
Your hand, atwilt in death, transmuted blood
Of murder into healing pharmaceuticals,
Coagulating evil into good.
How like one crucified, my little boy
Now makes me, sick with wellness, retch in
joy.*

(Dedicated to the precious women who profoundly regret their abortions)

Rolley Haggard is a feature writer for BreakPoint.



MARRIAGE AND THE SUPREME COURT



USCCB Nationwide Bulletin Insert

May-June 2013

For the first time in our nation's history, the Supreme Court is considering two cases about whether or not marriage should be redefined to include two persons of the same sex. These cases involve the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and California's Proposition 8, both of which define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

The Court is expected to rule on both cases by the end of June. A broad negative ruling could redefine marriage in the law throughout the entire country, becoming the "**Roe v. Wade**" of marriage. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has joined with many other organizations in urging the Supreme Court to *uphold* both DOMA and Proposition 8 and thereby to recognize the essential, irreplaceable contribution that husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, make to society, and especially to children.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

PRAY, FAST, SACRIFICE

The Bishops have encouraged Catholics to participate in a ***Call to Prayer for Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty*** during this Year of Faith. Visit www.usccb.org/life-marriage-liberty to learn more and commit to praying and fasting for life, marriage, and religious liberty.

The Bishops have also called for a second ***Fortnight for Freedom*** June 21-July 4. Visit www.Fortnight4Freedom.org.

Please consider contributing time, talent, and/or treasure to local or national efforts seeking to protect the unique meaning of marriage.

ADVOCATE FOR MARRIAGE

Lead messages

Be a witness for the truth of marriage in word and action. Take advantage of opportunities to speak about marriage's unique meaning in conversation with friends, family, neighbors or co-workers. ***Share the truth in love.***

Everyone has inviolable dignity and deserves love and respect. There are many ways to protect the basic human rights of all, but redefining marriage serves no one's rights, least of all those of children.

What is marriage? Marriage is the permanent and exclusive union of one man and one woman, for the good of the spouses and for the procreation and education of children. **One man, one woman—for life.** (See Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 48).

The difference is the difference. Men and women *matter*. They are equal but different. Sexual difference is essential to marriage.

Mothers and fathers matter. They aren't interchangeable. Every child has a basic, natural right to come from and be raised in the loving marital union of his or her own father and mother.

Protecting marriage matters to everyone. It's Catholic social teaching 101: *pro-woman, pro-man, pro-child*. Redefining marriage in the law says many false things: women - mothers - are dispensable; men - fathers - are dispensable; what adults want trumps what a child deserves and has a basic right to.

LEARN MORE

Visit MarriageUniqueForAReason.org for more resources on the authentic meaning of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. For resources for engaged couples and married couples, visit ForYourMarriage.org and PorTuMatrimonio.org.

Why Go To Church When I Can Pray At Home?

www.RoyalDoors.net

St. John Chrysostom answers this question briefly when he writes:

They say:

‘We can pray at home.’ You are deceiving yourself, O man! Of course, one can pray at home. But it is impossible to pray there as in church, where such a multitude of hearts are uplifted to God, merging into one unanimous cry. You will not be so quickly heard while praying to the Master by yourself, as when praying together with your brethren, for here in church there is something greater than in your room: Agreement, unanimity, the bond of love, and finally here are the prayers of the priests.

The priests stand before us, then, so that the prayers of the people, being weak, would be united to their more powerful prayers and together with them ascend to heaven. The Apostle Peter was freed from prison, thanks to the common prayers offered for him.... (Act 12:5-17). If the Church’s prayer was so beneficial for the Apostle Peter and delivered such a pillar of the faith from prison, why, tell me, do you disdain its power and what kind of justification can you have for this. Listen to God Himself, Who says that the multitude of people who pray to him with fervor moves Him to have mercy. He says to the Prophet Jonah: ‘Shall I not spare Nineveh, that great city, in which dwell more than 120 thousand people.’ He did not simply mention the multitude of people but that you might know that prayer together has great power.

St. John of Kronstadt adds:

Here in church is the one thing needful; here is a refuge from vanity and the storms of life; here is the calm harbor for souls seeking salvation; here is incorrupt food and drink for souls; here is the light, which enlightens every man who comes into the world; here is pure spiritual air; here is the well of living water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:14); here the gifts of the Holy Spirit are distributed; here is the cleansing of souls. ... Here in church, a man will come to know the true nobility of his soul, the value of life and its aim or his assigned path; here he dispels the fascination of worldly vanity and worldly passions by acquiring sobriety in his soul; here he comes to know his destiny, both temporal and eternal; here he comes to know his bitter, profound fall and seduction by sin; here the Savior is to be found, particularly in His holy and life, creating Mysteries, and His salvation; here a man comes to know his true relationship with God and his neighbor or with his family and the society in which he lives. The church is an earthly heaven, the place where the closest union with the Divinity occurs; it is a heavenly school which prepares Christians for heavenly citizenship, teaching them about the ways of heaven, about the dwellings of heaven; it is the threshold of heaven; it is the place for common prayer, for thanksgiving, for glorifying the Triune God, Who created and preserves everything; it is unity with the angels. What is more precious and more honorable than the church? Nothing. During the divine service, as on a chart, the whole destiny of the human race is depicted, from beginning to end. The divine service is the alpha and omega of the destiny of the world and of men.



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Shining the Light

One Sunday morning, the parish priest talked about being the “light of the world” in his sermon. He explained that a person filled with the light of Christ, means that a person is filled with goodness, and knowledge and justice and truth. He ended his sermon by asking the congregation, “How do you intend to be a light of the world?” Unexpectedly, a little girl shouted out, “By being a pretty window!” Her parents were embarrassed by her outburst and told to be quiet.

Afterwards, however, the parish priest asked her what she meant. It turns out that the little girl had been staring at the church’s stained glass windows during the sermon. She said that the sun shining through the windows caused pretty colors to shine on people all through the

church. “If Jesus wants us to let our ‘light shine on others,’ then the best way to do that is by being a pretty window,” she said.

There is much truth in the simplicity of the little girl’s observations. Light is truth and it dispels the darkness of error and deceit. Christ our Lord said that we are to be the lights of that world and that our light must shine on others. (Matthew 5:16).

Today, we keep the memory of the Fathers of the First Nicene Council. These enlightened and inspired men were filled with the light of truth and corrected some grave misunderstandings about the humanity and divinity of Christ. The light of the truths they taught in the fourth century still shines upon us today and are contained within the words of the Nicene Creed.