

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (2022 - C)

Over the last few months, we have been making preparations to build a parish ark. Today, I want to say more about where we are in the process and more importantly, about why we need to build an ark.

To that end, let me begin with what we just heard in our holy gospel. There was a question posed to Jesus. Someone asked Him,

**“Lord, will only a few people be saved?”**

In response, Jesus said,

**“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough.”**

In other words, not everyone is going to be saved. Instead, many who thought they were God's friends will be left outside heaven's gates. The Lord will say to them, **“Depart from me, all you evildoers!”** Then, there will be **“wailing and grinding of teeth”** among those cast out.

**“Lord, will only a few people be saved?”** That is the question isn't it? Do we really need to be saved? If so, from what? Furthermore, how? Finally, what must we do to be saved? These are the essential questions of life, and we must know the answers to them before we die.

Now I am not going to beat around the bush today. Rather, I am going to do my best to be impartial. To simply state the facts as they pertain to our faith and to our salvation.

Let me begin by reviewing some basic teachings of our Catholic faith. The most important is that we believe in one God who is Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. Next, we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He is both true God and true man, and that He came into this world to save us from our sins. That, by the way, makes clear that salvation is not a given. It can be lost or rejected.

We also believe that baptism is necessary for salvation, that when we receive Holy Communion we are receiving our Lord Jesus Christ, body, blood soul and divinity. We believe that Jesus established the Catholic Church in order to preserve and pass on His teachings until He comes again, and that the Catholic Church is the one true Church.

In moral areas, we believe that human life is sacred and that all innocent human life must be respected and defended from conception until natural death. We believe that true marriage is between one man and one woman. We believe that sexual intimacy is good but only within the context of marriage, and that each act of intimacy must be open to new life.

Finally, we believe that to get to heaven, to be saved, we must keep God's commandments which means loving God above all things and loving our neighbor as our self.

That said, we now live in a culture which rejects these basic teachings of our Catholic faith. Our pagan culture is toxic and destructive to our faith. It's corrosive to our faith. Like an acid, it eats away at our resolve to live our faith. To put it another way, like an abrasive, it wears down our resolve to follow Jesus in all things. It's a poison that kills the life of God in our souls.

In fact, to put it bluntly, faith can survive in this environment only with great difficulty, and that is why we need to withdraw from this pagan culture. That is why we need to build a parish ark where truth and goodness and beauty are embraced and where we can support each other in living out our Catholic faith until better times come along.

Now, at this point, you might be shifting in your seats and some of you might be thinking, "Father has gone off the deep end. It's not that bad." However, before you head for the exits, let me remind you of a few things.

Our newest supreme court justice does not know what a woman is. The champion female swimmer this year is a man. Less than one in five millennials attend church, and one in four of them are either atheists, agnostics or nothing in particular. Of the 220 Democratic House Members, only one of them, Henry Cuellar from Texas, is pro-life. The New York City mayor is on record as supporting Drag Queen Story Hour for public school children in primary grades.

Selfishness has become a norm in our culture. Abortion supporters cry out, "My body, my choice," but no one says a word about the unborn child. In 2019, there were 70,630 deaths in our country due to drug overdose. Marriage rates are at an all-time low as are birth rates. People are very lonely. In fact, the United Kingdom now has an official "Minister of Loneliness" who works to combat depression and suicide which are associated with loneliness.

We have pornography everywhere, and many people are deeply addicted to it. We have course and rude speech in public and on the air using every kind of vulgarity. Movies and TV programs routinely depict couples in intimate relationships outside of marriage. Women's clothing is simply immodest. I could go on, but I don't need to. You know these things too.

That said, all these things have had an effect on us and on our families and friends. I see young people who were enthused about the faith and adoration and about getting confirmed leaving the Church, and I wonder where I went wrong. You did your best to raise your children to know and love God, and now none of them go to Mass. We all have relatives and friends and coworkers who were raised in the faith quitting and just dropping out.

Just talking about this is unpleasant and depressing, and it's depressing because we don't know what to do about it. We want our loved ones to be saved, and we are in anguish when we see them choosing to live in ways that endanger their salvation.

So what can we do? I do not believe that on a cultural level we can fix things. The rot has gone too deep. Our culture is collapsing. It's like an old barn whose foundation is rotten; it's only a matter of time before it falls over. Trying to fix our culture would be like putting a

new roof on that barn. The building will look better for a little while, but it's still going to fall over.

Let me put this differently. From a demographic standpoint our culture cannot survive. Our family structure has been too badly damaged. Goodness and generosity and virtue and order and are all learned behaviors. These things must be passed on from one generation to the next. Children learn from their parents and this is true even in the animal kingdom.

For example, cats bring live mice to their kittens to teach them how to catch prey. Migratory animals like elk and elephants teach their young where to go for food and water as the weather and seasons change. Eagles hover over their nests to encourage their young to fly, but when young animals are separated from their parents, they do not learn these things.

In a similar way, many of our young people are essentially uncivilized. They did not learn about goodness and truth and beauty in their homes. Consequently, they are hardly more than barbarians who take but do not give and who believe might makes right. That also explains in part why so few people are getting married today and raising families. In fact, now almost half of those 18 and over are not married. In 1970 it was only one in four.

As with all living things, the human race must constantly be renewed. There must always be new life to replace those who die. Furthermore, children must be taught how to become good men and women and how to succeed in life. Children need to learn how to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others. But that learning is no longer happening. Instead, at least two generations of people have been raised to think only about themselves.

That is why I say the rot is too deep. The other side, the side of darkness now controls all the major components that go to make up our society. This is especially true in the Government and in the fields of Education and Health Care and those of you who work in these areas can see this clearly. Institutional policies on every level cater to the individual, private good over the common good, but no institution or organization or society can survive when it caters to the individual's wants and desires.

So, what to do? Can we fix this? Or do we just give up? As people of faith, we cannot give up or give in. We have the truth on our side. More importantly, Jesus Christ has conquered sin and Satan and death. That is why we have a duty and an obligation to proclaim the good news of salvation to all the world. We must continue to do this. Now is not the time to give up.

That said, we need to be realistic about what's going on. We must be realistic about the world in which we live. It is a world that is both toxic and increasingly hostile to our Catholic faith. We need to come to terms with the fact that we can no longer keep doing what we have been doing. We have powerful spiritual enemies who desire our destruction.

The fact is that the problem is too big for any individual or family to tackle. In many ways, it's even too big for a parish family to handle. In some ways, it may be even too big for the Church to handle.

It's also true that what we are doing is not working. We have been making too many compromises with the culture. We keep backing up. We keep accommodating. We keep making excuses. To keep peace, we keep adjusting our beliefs and practices, but that strategy has not helped things. It has only served to weaken us in nearly every respect.

So here's what we can do and what we are going to do. The solution for now is for us to step out of the culture and wait out the storm. We cannot fight this pagan culture alone because the cultural influences are too strong.

Together however, we can do something. When we work together and support each other and our families, we are stronger. When we are together, we will not feel as isolated when everyone else is going downstream to destruction, and it seems like we are the only ones going upstream to safety.

In our parish ark, we can promote goodness and truth and beauty and help each other live out our faith and become saints. We can also invite those who are seeking the truth to come in out of the darkness and join us.

I have been a priest for 35 years. At this point, I don't care that much any more about those who have decided to reject Church teaching on whatever. You name it ... the Eucharist, Confession, Gay Marriage, Contraception, Abortion, The Authority of the Church to teach in Christ's name, the fact that we have a duty and obligation to worship God on Sunday.

The reason I don't care is that we don't have the time or energy or resources anymore to save those who are compromised. They are mostly dead weight we can no longer afford to carry around. If you are in that camp, I would simply urge you to get off the wide road which leads to hell and turn back while you still can.

I am interested in helping those of you who are striving to enter through the narrow gate. I am interested in helping those of you who are sinners striving to become saints. I am interested in helping those of you who love God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. I am interested in helping those of you who want to save your souls and the souls of your children and grandchildren.

Saving our souls is serious business. In our Holy Gospel today, Jesus was asked, "**Lord, will only a few people be saved?**" He answered, "**Many will stand outside knocking ...**" As your pastor, my job is to shepherd my flock and protect it and make sure that it is not lost. That is why I am telling you it's time for us to build an ark and get on board. Next week, I will talk about the specific things we are going to do. Amen.