

And during the 40 Days for Life . . . We are invited to join fellow Christians from around our metro area to gather at the Pregnancy Resource Center at 415 Cherry S.E. on Saturday, October 15, from 10 to 11 a.m. to pray for their next-door neighbors: Planned Parenthood! Christians across the country that day will confront Planned Parenthood with the power of prayer on its 100th anniversary. It has become the nation's largest abortion provider, and the largest enabler of immorality. This will be a prayer vigil, NOT A PROTEST. As God's people, we seek his mercy to end the slaughter of innocent children and the immeasurable harm done to their mothers and fathers.

A good and thoughtful question was put to me by a parishioner recently. "Father," I was asked, "the Vice President claims to be a Catholic. Yet he openly supports and rejoices about abortion on demand, and now has been crowing about his own officiating at a ceremony of homosexual union. He's proud of these 'accomplishments.' Why doesn't his own bishop or the Cardinal Archbishop of Washington formally declare him excommunicated?"

The reasoning of my answer goes like this. I can't speak for Cardinal Wuerl, but from the way I follow the news and know the mindset of some of these nominally Catholic folks, I'd have to say that formal excommunication wouldn't do any good. The Vice President, the former Speaker of the House, the Governor of New York, the former Governor of Michigan, and numerous others have had it pointed out to them, sometimes individually and sometimes as a group, that they are in grave error and persisting in grave sin to promote things so contrary to the natural law, let alone the teaching of the Catholic Church. Popes one after another, along with the bishops of the United States, have repeatedly made it clear that no Catholic in politics can say, for instance, that they don't personally favor abortion; but, they claim, they have to look out for the "rights" of people who do not share their faith. No. Abortion is NEVER right for ANYONE. An atheist might claim that his or her conscience does not tell him it's wrong, so it's okay. And we respond, then your conscience is badly formed. It's not just the Catholic Church's choice or opinion to say it's wrong. It's revealed truth, and it's our duty to teach that to everyone. No Catholic can say, "I'm Catholic in church, but when I enter the Capitol (or the voting booth), I have to put my religion aside." Then you should not be in the Capitol, for the sake of your own immortal soul and that of millions of others to whom you are refusing to speak the truth. You are a baptized disciple of Jesus Christ. If you don't maintain that discipleship when you enter the Capitol, you aren't maintaining it anywhere else, either. Can you imagine a fervent member of the homosexual lobby being elected to office and then saying, "I have to put my own opinions aside and vote the way the majority of my constituents prefer"? Can you imagine a politician defending a maniac who roasts babies over an open fire by saying, "I personally wouldn't do it, but I can't interfere with some else's right to choose by imposing my beliefs on them"?

So why don't the Pope and the bishops formally excommunicate these offending Catholics? As I said, it wouldn't do any good. They cavalierly brush the question aside whenever it's presented. Some roll their eyes and try to say that not all Catholics believe that abortion is wrong. Well, 100% of Catholics are sinners, too, but that doesn't justify sin, mortal or venial, for any Catholic adult or child. You know it's wrong, you do it anyway – that's sin, and at the very least it has the potential of cutting you off from the life of God within you. Are votes worth that much to you? Clearly, for some, the answer to that is yes.

When the Pope or a bishop issues a formal decree of excommunication, Church law requires that it be an act of absolute last resort, and that it be done for the medicinal purpose of correction, to call the sinner back from his or her way. The "Catholic" politicians in question have already displayed their contempt for the teaching authority of the Church. There is virtually no chance that formal excommunication would change anything. They already think they are superior to and know better than the Church.

Formal excommunication would satisfy some folks within the Church, but I suspect it would be only so they could say, "There!! THAT'LL show 'em!!" But it wouldn't show "them" anything, and would not meet the requirements of what excommunication is intended to do. Some will say that it's no wonder people don't take the teaching of the Church seriously, when there's no clear and apparent penalty for going against it. That link would be difficult to prove. The mainstream media are ever alert, for instance, on any visit or pronouncement from the Pope, to see whether he's making any change in the Church's teaching and practice regarding abortion, birth control, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, embryonic stem cell research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, and (in the Roman rite) celibacy for the clergy. They badger about those same things over and over and over again. So they know very well what the Church's teaching is – minus, of course, the reasons and the nuances that give substance, beauty, and cohesion to our beliefs. *That* would be much too in-depth for "journalism" in its contemporary state. Besides, it would be just too contrary to the (im)moral agenda the media nearly unanimously promote. Oh no, they do understand the Church's teaching, take it very seriously, completely disagree with it, and work hard to transform the Church to look like the world. "All these kingdoms of the world I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me!" (Matthew 4:9). Sound like a familiar temptation?

Many people rather typically "blame" God when something terrible happens. "Why doesn't God DO something about this?" Like the Apostles, we might be prone to ask the Lord Jesus, after his expulsion from a Samaritan town, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them??!!" (Luke 9:54). Oh, wouldn't we love to see the spectacle, sinners frying like bacon and we ourselves looking down gleefully from heaven? So when we ask why God doesn't do something, after the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost -- hello? That's kind of the same question as why we don't excommunicate some people who certainly deserve it. The Pope and the bishops have done and are doing their job. Their statements and addresses on these subjects have been strong, numerous, and consistent. God turns the question back on us: What are YOU going to do about it? If all

the Catholics in the U.S. voted to throw the phony Catholics out of office, they'd be gone in a heartbeat. The fact is, those politicians fear "excommunication" from their party and their political power far, far more than they fear excommunication from the Church. No President has been elected in recent memory without winning a majority of the Catholic vote, and that's true of many other elected officials as well. So why should we expect the Pope and the bishops to do something that WE won't do? When a majority of Catholics vote for pro-abortion candidates, let's face it, those candidates know they can count on the Catholics to come through with votes regardless of what the Church says. But if they knew that Catholics were going to vote against them in droves, they'd be on stage with Scott Hahn, Raymond Arroyo, and Steve Ray in the blink of an eye, talking up Catholic orthodoxy at every opportunity.

The point is, YOUR VOTE in some ways is far more powerful than the Pope and the bishops. If you ask why "the Church" doesn't do something about the sad state of political affairs, remember that THAT is quite precisely the task of ALL the members of the Church. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: **"Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it"** (George Bernard Shaw, Irish playwright and critic, 1856-1950).