

Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time
Quinquagesima (Latin Mass, defined below)
Last Sunday before Ash Wednesday and beginning of Lent
February 19, 2023
Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant

“But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.’ Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, ‘I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.’” (Genesis 19:4-7)

One of the benefits of being here as long as I have been is knowing that together we, as a family, can use this time to reflect upon current issues, serious issues which impact our Catholic faith life. However, there are times such as these, when I wish we did not have to reflect upon certain issues, which I must now do this day. Recently, we have been able to read articles written in Catholic journals by Catholic Bishops concerning a sensitive topic – the sin of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. Due to the children which grace our Masses, I will be extremely careful in the way we present this topic for our reflection today. In a recent article concerning how to address people who have these inclinations, a Cardinal stated, this is “pre-eminently a pastoral question, not a doctrinal one.” The article would continue describing the Church’s pastoral activity as a “Field Hospital” (example taken from Pope Francis) which sought to tend the wounded. Even Pope Francis, in an interview with the Associated Press, addressed laws that criminalize individuals as “unjust,” saying God loves all his children just as they are. He encouraged people to welcome these brothers and sisters into the Church. Finally, just this month the Church of England approved blessings for couples, yet reiterated its stance that it would maintain its ban on defining this as a marriage. It went on to state that ministers could choose not to offer these blessings if they deemed it appropriate. It is in this time of Synodality, we are told, that the Catholic Church must go to those who are marginalized, working through dialogue and accompaniment, to offer them an expression of their inclusion into the “Big Tent” of the Church.

In these past few months, so many words have been dedicated to this topic by so many people. I have listened as some leaders have stated that the Catholic Church’s Tradition is a “Living Tradition,” and like all living things, are subject to change. The more I listen, the more I am made to feel if I question or think differently, then I am the one who is narrow-minded or judgmental. It is such a difficult issue. I think it is so very difficult because many of us know someone, or maybe many people, for whom this applies. Therefore, I do not want to address this issue in any way which would diminish the dignity of these individuals. They too are children of God. To reflect upon this honestly, we must begin with both the Bible and our Tradition. We need to read what each one states concerning these, our brothers and sisters, and only after, may we morally and ethically offer a truthful insight of what a proper response should entail.

Since the time of Lot, the practice of this way of life has been referred to as “Sodomy.” The gravity of this sin has been expressed in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, one only needs to read Leviticus 20:13 to understand how this was viewed. While in the New Testament, we can turn to the writings of Saint Paul, (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10), to read the way he addressed this issue. The Catechism of the Catholic Church dedicates three paragraphs, (#2357, #2358, #2359), to addressing this issue. Although brief and clear, the teachings of the Catechism are tied into our understanding of marriage and view the expression of this form of love as an exclusion of the generation of new life proper to married couples. I would encourage all of you to go and read both the Bible and the Catechism to see for yourselves what is taught by both.

My family, if we are to be “pastoral” then we must take a step back and consider one glaring fact – all of these address an activity, not the orientation of an individual. This is what we must pause to seriously reflect

upon. For not every person with this orientation acts upon it. For a person to have a particular orientation is no different from a person being either tall or short. An orientation is not sinful. The Catholic Church, to my knowledge, nor science has been able to explain how or why this orientation occurs within individuals. In the Bible, activity/behavior was addressed, not orientation. Our Catechism, however, does distinguish between the two. Yet, even in our time, there are voices within the Church which still confuse the two. They deem as “pastorally insensitive” or “rigid” those who would hold a difference, refusing to change the official teaching of the Catholic Church. And this is where this issue becomes very sticky. The human dignity of any person consists in the fact that they are human, not in an orientation nor a behavior. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity, value, and worth. This is a doctrinal belief of our Catholic Church. Likewise, participation in the family of the Catholic Church is not dependent upon the excellence of the family member. Jesus established His Church to show compassion toward all of its members, those of various orientations and those who would seek to dismiss those of various orientations. To water down the teachings of the Catholic Faith, under the guise of being “pastoral,” truly does a great disservice to our brothers and sisters who struggle to live chaste lives with this orientation. Instead, we must open our hearts to pray for them. This is a share, their share, in our Lord’s Cross. May God grant them the strength to bear this cross as best as they can.