

Reminders and Resources for the winter 2024 Homily Series

Life-Giving Choices
Week Two — Solidarity

It is a context which forms people and we, as part of society, contribute to that context. If we are to be a People of Life, we must look at our responsibilities to uphold all of life.

Scripture connections:

In the Gospel we see Jesus' authority unfold. He practices making **life-giving choices** throughout all of his earthly ministry by helping to restore the dignity of those in need, such as the man with an unclean spirit. Jesus modeled what standing in **solidarity** looks like, as he embraced the outcast and the oppressed. In doing so he demanded a societal shift. We are called to do the same.

Three reasons solidarity matters:

NOTE: The quoted material below comes from Cardinal Cupich's speech entitled, "The Bond of Perfection: From a Consistent Ethic of Life to an Integral Ethic of Solidarity." This speech was based on Cardinal Bernardin's teaching 40 years ago and the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

1. Unity through understanding

- For us to grow in our capacity to make life-giving choices, we need to understand the issues that impact life. We need to reject the lure of polarization and seek a more complete education on the issues.
- The starting block for Christians is to look at how Jesus lived. We are to be "the presence of God's merciful action among" people... and everything "which deserves the name Christian must be geared toward helping — and serving — God's people."
- Pope Francis "has advanced Catholic teaching against the death penalty, to the degree that he has included its prohibition in the Catechism." He "structures many of his teachings according to his abiding belief in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring God's children together. This is one of the driving ideas behind his call for the Church to become ever more synodal."

2. Recognizing our interconnectedness

- "Today we are living in isolation from one another, and how we obtain information about others and the world tends to reinforce that great enemy of dialogue: fear." We need to override that fear by fostering life-giving connections with one another.
- Fear caused by isolation only promotes more polarization, which is "having disastrous consequences across American culture. Racial injustice is rampant. Gun violence is terrorizing communities... Poor health and nutrition kill children and the elderly. Rural communities go ignored. Urban centers are maligned as lost to crime and poverty. The demonization of migrants is especially disturbing, as we are a nation built by immigrants."
- Migrants fleeing to the US — whether by desert, jungle, or ocean — are like people escaping a house fire. Our faith says migrants are our neighbors too. And when we recognize our interconnectedness with all people, we rise to the call Jesus gave us to care for one another.

3. Compassion in action

- The answer to polarization is solidarity. "...Solidarity is not a 'feeling of *vague* compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to *commit* oneself to the common good." (Cupich quoting St. John Paul II)
- "Compassion frustrates the logic of team sports, which seems to govern civic life today, in which cruelty toward one's ideological opponents has taken on a perverse form of cultural currency. It does so by replacing the logic of competition with the logic of love. When we let go of what we think we know is best, when we give up the need to control outcomes, we make room for God. We begin to see the sufferings of others with the eyes of the Father."
- Compassion *in action* means we address the threats to life, we work together to problem-solve the issues, and we do our part to promote healing. The point is to do something. Do not be a bystander. Make the life-giving choice to respond.

Learn from Jesus

Jesus healed the leper who no one wanted to touch. He reached out to the tax collector who others would have dismissed as a traitor. He stood with the woman caught in adultery who society was ready to murder. And there are many more examples. Jesus taught us how to make **life-giving choices** by way of living in **solidarity** with the marginalized. In fact, Jesus' solidarity with *us* is what led him to the cross.

Prayer — *By Inclusive Justice Initiative* (<https://www.stapostle.org/racial-justice-focus/>)

Loving and merciful God, who created us all in Your image, help open our eyes to the dignity and inherent value of all Your children. Awaken in us a passion for inclusion, reflection, and justice, so that, with Your grace, we may live and act in peace and solidarity with one another. We ask this, and all prayers of the Universal Church, so that all may be one in the name of Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Resources:

- Lighthouse Recovery — outpatient substance abuse treatment program based in St. Charles, IL: <http://lighthouserecoveryinc.com/>
- *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative — committed to ending mass incarceration: <https://justmercy.eji.org/>
- Sojourners — ecumenical media and advocacy organization: <https://sojo.net/>
- KFF — independent source for health policy research, etc: <https://www.kff.org/>
- Project Rachel — helps women experiencing grief from the loss of a child by abortion, and offers them reconciliation and healing: <https://hopeafterabortion.com/>
- The Black maternal health crisis — Serena Williams' experience: <https://www.self.com/story/serena-williams-black-maternal-health-instagram>
- The Bond of Perfection: From a Consistent Ethic of Life to an Integral Ethic of Solidarity — by Cardinal Cupich: <https://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/2023-09/ing-039/the-bond-of-perfection-from-a-consistent-ethic-of-life-to-an-int.html>
- Outreach and Social Justice ministries of STA — opportunities for life-giving choices: <https://www.stapostle.org/ministries/outreach-social-justice-ministries/>