

Pastor's Column

Rev. Michael Ratajczak
michaelr@stmoside.org
758-4100 x100

A Discipline of the Heart

Hopefully, we see our journey of life as a spiritual journey. We are a people who have come from “somewhere” and we are a people going “somewhere.”

We have purpose, meaning, and destiny. In our modern world, filled with so many distractions, we can easily get “disconnected.” We become lost, and frightened; we act out accordingly.

October, in the Catholic Church, is “Respect Life” month. We take time, in a special way, to weave the connections between all life issues. The very first step, though, is to take time, with and for ourselves, to get “in touch” with life.

To keep focused, we need to be disciplined. I share with you the words of Fr. Henri Nouwen, taken from “Letters to Marc about Jesus”:

A Discipline of the Heart

“The spiritual life demands a discipline of the heart. Discipline is the mark of a disciple of Jesus. That doesn’t mean, however, making things difficult for yourself, but making available the inner space where God can touch you with an all-transforming love. We human beings are so faint-hearted that we have a lot of trouble leaving an empty space empty. We like to fill it all up with ideas, plans, duties, tasks, and activities.

It strikes me increasingly just how hard-pressed people are nowadays. It’s as though they’re tearing about from one emergency to another. Never solitary, never still, never really free but always busy about something that just can’t wait. You get the impression that amid this hurly-burly, we lose touch with life itself. We have the experience of being busy while nothing really seems to happen. The more agitated we are, and the more compacted our lives become, the more difficult it is to keep a space where God can let something truly new take place.

The discipline of the heart helps us to let God into our hearts so that God can become known to us there, in the deepest recesses of our own being. This is not so easy to do; we like to be master in our own house and don’t want to admit that our house is God’s house too.”

As Catholics, we are a “Pro-life” people. We believe in the protection of life from womb to tomb. This is a very prophetic belief to promote, to live, and to encourage within the world in which we live.

As we approach our national elections, we are mindful that neither party, Democratic or Republican, are “pro-life” in the Catholic Tradition.

It is the challenge of each of us to take time to know the positions of the candidates and the political parties, to know the teachings of the Catholic Church, and to be familiar with recent pronouncements of the USCCB (The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

In preparing for your vote in the upcoming election, I would encourage you to read “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States.” Go to the website: <http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/> and read the Bishops’ statement.

Reflect on all the issues, reflect on the statements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, as they speak in unison, and then, in conscience, vote for those whom you feel best reflect the Catholic Church’s position on life, from womb to tomb.

No one can tell you how to vote!

That is always the matter of an informed conscience, between you and God.

What the Church Magisterium encourages and challenges you to do is to be a faithful citizen and to be politically involved and to vote.

We pray in a special way in these days for our country and for the election that lies before us!

Fr. Mike