

Oct. 8-9, 2016

Thoughts from the pastor,

First I have two quick repeat reminders. Next weekend we will have olive-wood art from the Holy Land on sale in the church entry. This helps Catholic families in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The week after that will be the Anointing of the Sick at the Masses.

The next reminder has to do with the election. If you tie into Catholic media in Nebraska you will have been hearing a lot about the death penalty lately. The Nebraska bishops are encouraging us to vote to retain the repeal of the death penalty. They in turn get that message from the last few popes. The message is clear from Church teaching. Although the death penalty has had its place in society over the centuries, it is no longer seen as a good balance of rights and wrongs. This is on a totally different moral level as abortion. Abortion is intrinsically evil because it is destroying the life of an innocent person. The person who is guilty of a heinous crime is not in that category of being innocent. Our system was set up to keep a person from being a danger to society when our prisons were not adequate. This is not the case now. The second reason the Church is against the death penalty in modern society is that it doesn't leave a possible conversion experience in the hands of God. We are taking the person's life rather than leaving it in the hands of God.

The other reasons that the Nebraska bishops mention have more to do with the practical reality of this in our state. The appeals process is tremendously expensive and cuts funds that could do more good in setting up rehab programs. It also creates problems with people who have been imprisoned falsely. There have been many cases in which innocent people have finally been released because the court system made a mistake. Just being in prison for life is bad enough for something you didn't do. At least there is always hope someone will be able to prove the person innocent. With the death penalty that hope ends suddenly. Another reason is that most studies show that the death penalty has no helpful effect in deterring crime. Also the very type of death penalty, lethal injection, is no longer workable because of the problems obtaining the needed ingredients.

As I mentioned this is not on the same level as abortion. I personally find it problematic that people who have no problem using artificial means of birth control, that can be abortive, will fight harder to stop the death penalty than stopping their use of lethal force on their unborn children. But it is the hope and prayer of the bishops and myself that we can retain the repeal of the death penalty in Nebraska.

In about a month I will be in Singapore for a day as a part of my vacation. I had been there about twenty years ago. At that point it had the second highest rate of capital punishment in the world. They executed 50 to 70 people per year in a population of less than three million. They have had the death penalty since they were a British Colony. It truly was a crime deterrent at that point. I was told the executions happened within a month of being sentenced and the trial was within weeks of the crime committed. Any problem with illegal drugs was considered a capital offence. Now they are executing less than four per year. I am interested in finding out what the effect this change of policy has had on the country.

This is not the situation in Nebraska or in the U.S.A. Our system seems to be totally ineffective. Most of that I place in our loss of Christian values.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank