

CHAPLAIN'S BULLETIN AUGUST 28, 2022



Dear Folks,

What does it mean to be part of the royal family of God? Last week I wrote about Jesus as prophet, priest, and king, and how we are to participate in those three roles as well, or perhaps, how Jesus exercises those roles through us. I think in these days we need to think more about the royal role, in which we are called to be leaders in this world.

In the book “Leadership Without Easy Answers” by Ronald Heifetz, he says that a leader points to the reality that calls for adaptive change and keeps the conversation focused on the relevant issues.

We can tell the story of the Gospel, and also the story of how the world looks through the Gospel lens. This involves a vision of what it is to be human, and what makes for a good life. How many people think it’s important to have a good life? What does that even mean? Have we thought about it? I would suggest that many (most?) people presume the question has been answered and charge ahead focused on immediate issues without regard to the larger picture.

There are always tensions between Christian belief and the accepted beliefs of society. Right now, there is tremendous, fierce tension on the understanding of being male and female, on the meaning of sex, on the meaning of family, and the sanctity of life. These are all connected, and the Catholic understanding shows to live that leads to human flourishing.

Mary Eberstadt in her book “Adam and Eve After the Pill” tells about how the sexual revolution has done great harm, but even though there are mountains of data, people refuse to recognize it. She compares it to the days of the Soviet Union, when there was a huge amount of evidence that their system caused tremendous human suffering, but so many refused to acknowledge it. There is a great “will to disbelieve.” I would also recommend “The Truth Overruled” by Ryan T. Anderson, which goes into more detail about the fierce resistance that meets any dissent.

As long as people look at their identity being all about their feelings, people will not be able to develop a solid sense of self, and a profound and stable vision for life becomes harder and harder. As long as people look at sex as a toy, it will facilitate treating other people as toys, easy to use and discard. Conceiving children becomes an inconvenience rather than a vocation, and life without abortion become unthinkable. If marriage is whatever we feel like it being, it will not have a solid foundation, and we lose the central crucible for forming people to be part of civilization. Our society has so much violence, so much anger, so much loneliness, so much misery. I’m reminded of Mahatma Ghandhi being asked what he thought of western civilization, and he said, “I think it would be a good idea.”

If we share the beautiful truth about how God made us for love, and what love really is (as in not a feeling but a decision) how the way we share ourselves is central to the good life. This leads to an understanding of the authentic gift of self and the fullness of human life. We can recognize our feelings and know that they are important, but they can come and go and can mislead us. We can present a vision of what marriage is that will lead to a society that flourishes. The conversation might start with some questions, like “Why does human life matter?” “What is marriage and why does it matter?” “Is loving a person different from loving ice cream?” Who knows what will follow from that?

By developing our ability to present the Catholic faith, the Catholic vision of how Jesus reveals to us what it means to be human and being able to do it in a compelling and inspiring way, we can be leader in the world.

Blessings, Fr. Jim