

Homily for 6th Sunday 2012

February 11, 2012

Readings:

Theme:

Places: St. Gregory, Hart, MI; St. Lazare, Spring Lake, MI

Lev. 13.1-46, Ps. 32, 1 Cor. 10.31-11.1, Mk. 1.40-45

Jesus heals the human body and soul, and our national soul too needs Jesus' healing.

In today's gospel, Jesus heals a man afflicted with leprosy. In many of Jesus' two dozen healing miracles, but not in today's miracle story, Jesus heals the person not only physically but also spiritually by forgiving them their sins. Jesus heals the body and the soul.

What healing from Jesus do you seek for your body and soul? ... What healing from Jesus do you seek for our country's body and soul? ...

Body. Our body is God's creation. None of us owns his/her body; it is God-given. We are responsible for how we use it. Many people's bodies have become unhealthy, and they wish they currently had the good health that they used to have, and the good health which most of us take for granted. Many people don't take good care of their bodies; many of us eat too much or too much of the wrong foods. We might drink excessively, take illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs, or smoke legally or illegally. Many of us don't exercise as we should. Some people on extreme TV sports take imprudent risks with their bodies. On the other hand, some people give excessive attention to their bodies: spending hours in physical exercising, or primping and adorning the body. Last week on some match-maker TV show, one very beautiful woman said that she never wants to have children, because pregnancy would change her beautiful shape. How shallow a personality is that? All of the aforementioned actions go against God's intentions for the proper use of our God-given bodies.

Soul. The adage is: "we become what we read, watch, and listen to." Do you keep a Bible opened at home; the Bible is the first place/locus of revelation? Do you read the lives of the saints whose lives serves as the second locus/place of revelation? Good Catholic literature in hardcopy and electronic sources abound. My own vocation arose in part from reading the Maryknoll Mission magazine at home. The liberal media of whom studies report that 98% do not believe in God, know very little about the Church. They understand what is physical and material: numbers, dollars, poll results. They are educationally incapable of thinking about the metaphysical. Please turn your mind to and feed your soul with substantial reading or listening materials. Turn your mind to the countless sources of truth seeking, truth-speaking Catholic media. Also, our souls need silence. Silence is the prelude to regular communication with God. St. Augustine writes, "You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Our prayers experience so many distractions because so much of our lives are filled with distractions. If

you want to grow in relation with God, please read and listen to good Catholic media, make time and space for silence in your lives. Silence sets the stage for communicating more deeply in our mind and souls with God.

Speaking of our nation's soul, I want to provide updated information and perspective on President Obama's mandate that Catholic and other religious institutions must violate their conscience by providing insurance coverage for contraception, sterilization, and abortifacient drugs. This past Friday at noon, the president finalized an "accommodation" so that religious institutions won't have to provide and pay for these anti-life services, but instead their insurance companies will have to, and then the religious institutions can reimburse their insurance companies. One internet blogger provides this analogy for the president's action: "I would never kill my spouse; I'll hire a hit-man to kill him/her." The Beckett Fund for Religious Liberty makes this comment: "This is a false compromise designed to protect the president's re-election chances, not to protect the right of conscience." Professional politicians and commentators have described the president's "accommodation" as an "accounting gimmick," "a bait and switch," "a shell game," and "a smokescreen." Any freshman college student in Accounting 101 can see through this game: instead of the religious groups paying directly, now the president suggests that the religious groups can pay indirectly.

From the Bishops' statement, may I read three paragraphs: the first, next to last, and last.

The Catholic bishops have long supported access to life-affirming healthcare for all, and the conscience rights of everyone involved in the complex process of providing that healthcare. That is why we raised two serious objections to the 'preventive services' regulation issued by the U.s. Departure of Health and Human Services (HHS) in August 2011.

... We just received information about this proposal for the first time this morning; we were not consulted in advance. Some information we have in writing and some is oral. We will, of course, continue to press for the greatest conscience protection we can secure from the Executive Branch. But stepping away from the particulars, we note that today's proposal continues to involve needless government intrusion in the internal governance of religious institutions, and to threaten government coercion of religious people and groups to violate their most deeply held convictions. In a nation dedicated to religious liberty as its first and founding principle, we should not be limited to negotiating within these parameters. The only complete solution to this religious liberty problem is for HHS to rescind the mandate of these objectionable services..

We will therefore continue – with no less vigor, no less sense of urgency – our efforts to correct this problem through the other two branches of government. For example, we renew our call on Congress to pass, and the Administration to sign, the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act. And we renew our call to the Catholic faithful, and to all our fellow Americans, to join in this effort to protect religious liberty and freedom of conscience for all.

Regarding this mandate and its “accommodation,” the Devil is in the details. The USCCB statement about the “accommodation adds, “We note at the outset that the lack of clear protection for key stakeholders – for self-insured religious employers, for religious and secular for-profit employers, for secular non-profit employers, for religious insurers, and for individuals - is unacceptable and must be corrected. The US Bishops summarized their position vis-à-vis the mandate and its accommodation in this way: “rescission [is] the only complete solution.” No responsible persons would agree to this “accommodation” until they see the details; once before, people were duped by Nancy Pelosi ‘s instruction: “pass it, then read it.” This president has promised before to various dignitaries that he would protect religious rights. “Once burned, twice warned.” Who would ever again on this issue trust the words or deeds of President Obama?

President Obama through his promotion of the HHS mandate has initiated an official war against religion. This issue is the tip of the iceberg. If we Catholics and other people of religion lose at this juncture, the flood-gates of official persecution will be opened. Priests, pastors, deacons and teachers will be arrested for “hate speech” if they speak against same-sex marriage; this already has happened at Australia, Ireland, and Canada. Ten years ago, Supreme Court Justice Anthony Scalia wrote that with the overturning of Houston’s anti-sodomy law that no legal obstacles remained to the behaviors of man-boy love and bestiality. We stand at a crossroads. I ask all Catholics and people of good will to stand with the US bishops and leaders of all other Christian religions to support the Culture of Life vs. the Culture of Death. Many wolves in sheep’s clothing have appeared, and pro-abortion political forces are leading our country down the pathway of extinction as a Christian Civilization. Catholics are free to vote for whomever they wish, and many good Catholics for any panoply of legitimate reasons voted in 2008 for Obama. That is their legitimate freedom of choice. President Obama in this HHS mandate, however, is committing grave intrinsic evils against Almighty God, against life, and against the First Amendment. Defenders of freedom of religion, stand up and speak up. Our nation’s soul stands in need of healing by Jesus who is the one true Healer.

All of us individuals need healing in our body and soul. Our country too needs moral healing. We pray and work for our moral conversion. Please pray and work too for President Obama’s moral conversion.

