

## **Homily (26<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time) – 10/1/2017**

*On August 21<sup>st</sup> Lynne Abrahams from the Weather Channel broke down in tears in front of national television audience. She was covering the Lunar Eclipse. The moon blocking out the sun causing parts of America to experience total darkness. The experience of wonder, mystery, and awe in our solar system moved her to tears. A sense of such mystery and wonder and awe are pillars of religion. It is in the spirit of such experience that we speak about respect for life.*

*Now, the Catholic Church in speaking about respect for life, usually goes into three categories. The first is its stand against abortion. Only the living are for abortion. However for the church, human life is sacred from the first moment of conception. Still for many Catholics pro-life ends at birth. Yet the church is also not in favor of capital punishment. Nor does it approve of assisted suicide.*

*Let's look at each. Now in speaking about abortion I am well aware that members of this congregation know of someone who has had one. Let me be clear: when a woman comes to me confessing an abortion I always take the approach what you did was wrong....but you are not wrong. What you did was bad...but you are not bad. And there are always circumstances where the woman might not have even known the seriousness of having an abortion.*

*Coming to the sacrament of reconciliation, confession can be great therapy for the soul. In that sacrament we celebrate what has already happened: God's forgiveness. So if you know of someone who would want to celebrate such forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation, I will always make myself available.*

*Now, we will look at capital punishment. It has always puzzled me that if I go to a college campus and speak about abortion, there are predictable garden variety answers. Usually the focus on one theme: Abortion is between a woman and her doctor. If I ask the same audience about capital punishment, the answer is, "Oh that is barbaric". The college audience will say "sentence the murderer to life imprisonment." However, if I spoke to parishioners, often the response was the exact opposite: against abortion but for capital punishment. When did life lose its sacredness? As Saint Pope John Paul 11 wrote: "we have enough prisons, there is no need for such a penalty as capital punishment."*

*Please don't get me wrong: I celebrated religious services for five years inside a maximum security prison. I am not a dewy eyed romantic. Unfortunately human nature can act depraved, so I am thankful we have prisons. And yet despite the brutality of any crime, an eye for an eye is not the Christian way. Capital punishment is wrong.*

*The third category is what is commonly referred to as euthanasia or today assisted suicide. Someone is suffering from an incurable disease. They see their suffering and their lives as meaningless. So they decide to end it.*

*Up until this past Wednesday a priest by the name of Father Philip Johnson was going to address this part of the homily. This young man is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy. After graduation he chooses to study for ordained priesthood. However, along the way he contracts a serious and debilitating cancer. After a series of chemotherapy treatments and setbacks he was deemed fit enough to continue his studies. He was ordained to the priesthood last January. In the past he has responded with effective credibility in addressing this issue. He was unable to come today because the chemo treatments made it impossible to overextend himself beyond a limited ministry. Father Philip sees his human life as a gift from God and ties in his suffering to the suffering of Christ. His life is his homily and I am sorry he could not speak to you. Still you see in this young man the beauty of God's life, not just in the wonders of our solar system but even in suffering. I think Father Philip would make us to do what Stefanie Abrahams did: rejoice in tears for the gift of existence and human life.*