

**October 11, 2020 | 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**

[IS 25:6-10A](#)

[PS 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6](#)

[PHIL 4:12-14, 19-20](#)

[MT 22:1-14 OR 22:1-10](#)

*By Thad Crouch*

In the sixth episode of “The Chosen” TV series, a desperate craftsman tries to pawn his tools until the shop owner spots a wound under his sleeve. The owner screams that the leper must leave. Later we see him covered in a rash, destitute, abandoned, and alone. He pleads with Jesus. The apostles warn Jesus to stay away, yet Jesus heals him. The leper is overcome with tears of joy and hugs Jesus. He can now be included in society. The apostles too are transformed by their relationship and trust in Jesus.

To pray “Jesus, I trust in you” and experience divine mercy calls us, like the apostles, to rethink who is included in the Kingdom of God, to whom we must show compassion, and to live the Gospel of Life.

“Live the Gospel of Life” is the theme for this year’s Respect Life Month inspired by 25 years of St. Pope John Paul II’s encyclical. In it, St. John Paul wrote that the incomparable worth and dignity of humans are both central to and indivisible from the message of Jesus -- a message that showed compassion beyond those who shared his race, religion, culture, and nationality.

Jesus showed compassion on those whom his culture deemed unclean -- throw-away people like lepers and prostitutes, collaborators with enemy oppression like tax collectors, enemies of his people like a centurion who asked his help, people who were considered racial half-breed traitors like Samaritans, and even enemies of the early Church like Saul of Tarsus.

The Gospel of Life includes threats to dignity such as war, euthanasia, bad working conditions, deportation, and abortion with the later as a preeminent issue because it is always intrinsically evil. Some threats to life are intrinsically evil and some aren’t. Some of us are called and gifted to ministry on specific issues, yet trusting Jesus and proclaiming the Gospel of life means denouncing all the culture of death’s threats to life and dignity. St. Archbishop Oscar Romero said, “Nothing is so important to the Church as human life, as the human person...Jesus said that whatever is done to them he takes as done to him. That bloodshed, those deaths, are beyond all politics. They touch the very heart of God.”

It’s not either respect life of the terminally ill or convicted murders, it’s both.

It’s not war is a respect life issue but abortion is preeminent, it’s and abortion is preeminent.

The Consistent Life Ethic saturates The Gospel of Life even if the words are not there just as the word “Trinity” is not in scripture. We must not use the Constant Life Ethic to ignore abortion or euthanasia. We cannot use the intrinsic evil category to ignore racism, war, refugees, or the death

penalty. We respect life and dignity womb to tomb. Perhaps the wedding garment we need is the seamless garment.

Pope Francis has become the fourth pope to prioritize the inviolability and dignity of the person above the death penalty regardless of whether it's intrinsically evil or not. Paul VI abolished the Vatican's national death penalty. St. John Paul II's *The Gospel of Life* changed the Catechism by placing criminals' dignity above the gravity of the crime after Sr. Helen Prejean wrote him that politicians abuse the "gravity of the crime" to get executions. *The Gospel of Life* says that the cases in which executions are necessary "are very rare, if not practically nonexistent."

Later, in 1999 John Paul called for the death penalty "cruel and unnecessary" appealed to abolish it. In 2011 Benedict XVI asked leaders to abolish it and to reform penal systems to respect prisoners' dignity. Francis says it's inadmissible because modern detention can "ensure the due protection of citizens" while upholding dignity.

While the liberalism of the left claims bodily freedom takes priority over life and dignity, the liberalism of the right claims freedom for-profits and personal property over dignity. The Gospel of Life (paragraph 4) and Fratelli Tutti (paragraph 105) warn about such inordinate desires.

During this election season and afterward, let our trust in Jesus transform us put the Gospel of Life above partisan politics as we vote, advocate, and petition for life, justice, and peace. We are one human family. The earth is our common home, well, and pantry. Gluttony and greed while others starve neglect family. Therefore all violence is domestic violence. All injustice and domination is domestic abuse. We are called to co-create a healthy loving family in a shared peaceful home.

*Thad Crouch hosts [Choose Life Abort War Podcast for Peace](#), coordinates this Linking the Lectionary to Justice and Peace Project for the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and serves on both the Social Justice Committee and Respect Life Ministry team at St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church in Austin, Texas.*