

Fr. Paul Sretenovic, 04/22/2018

Third Sunday after Easter

Father began the sermon by reciting a Hail Mary.

Yesterday I was visiting a family and speaking about this announcement I am making this morning concerning the drive for our school. It isn't a money drive but an enrollment drive with a sign-up sheet for those who would like to enroll their children in Padre Pio Academy. All this is next week rather than this, week but it is coming.

Now, I don't remember how the subject came up, but we were talking about how baffling it is that there are some Catholics who, when it comes to voting, they would vote against an imperfect law for the sake of the perfect. So in other words, imagine an anti-abortion law that in and of itself is fine, but then you find a certain exception attached to it. You consider the evil attachment and decide, well, the first is good, this part isn't good, so I can't vote for it. Not really. There can still be such things as substantially good laws that you may disagree with in part, but you should still vote for that law because of the lives saved in the process.

Similarly, I was looking for that one line which I could use on behalf of the school today as well as other thoughts I was reflecting upon and I said, You know, that sums it up: Do not abandon the good for the sake of the perfect or the idea of the perfect. We live in imperfect times and as such, wherever you go in the spectrum of tradition, you will always find those things that make us feel better about ourselves by complaining about them. (Father laughing) So there may perhaps be another place so much better than what we have here, but then all of a sudden you realize well wait a minute – what they have in this respect is terrible, so I can't do it.

I was reflecting a little upon this dilemma and I considered that I cannot tell you how many times, how many years; every single year there is one time where I am tempted to say, Oh, next year I'm bending the good for the sake of the perfect. I'm just going to stay at home; I'm going to, for whatever reason, this reason or that, I am just not going to teach. And of course, every single year I have this same thought, and every single year I come back and teach because ultimately what the school is doing is very good and for myself, I realize that we are all in this for the salvation of the souls of our children. I remember Mrs. Lewis has told me, and I don't know how many times, "I just want these children to get a good Catholic education and to save their souls. That's why we are doing what we're doing". We may not always agree in every single detail on how to get to that end but that's okay. That's the situation wherever you may be.

In retrospect I think I would have a deep regret if at any time I had said, You know something? I'm just going to stop teaching because what I believe is correct! I know children would really suffer for that; not because I'm the best teacher in the world, but by being a priest, there is something I can give that others cannot just by my presence, just by wearing this collar or wearing my cassock; by being there for them. I teach science at Padre Pio, and normally we have a chance at the end of a class to talk a little bit about religion or science because we open it up for questions and, let me tell you, our high

school class has a lot of questions concerning the Faith or concerning different aspects of things, maybe different friends they have who are not Catholic or maybe the Novus Ordo. Well, how do I help them to understand this or that or whatever it is? If I weren't there I would not be able to do that.

I had occasion eight or nine years ago, I was speaking to a priest in Colorado Springs, Father Anthony Ward – some of you may be familiar with him – he was ordained in 1973 by Archbishop Lefebvre and he helped the Archbishop in the United States for ten years or so before they had gone their separate ways. And I said to him, “You know Father, I think about Tradition and about the way things should be, but no matter how many times I try to change things I cannot”. Fr. Ward just looked at me – I imagine Father Schell saying the same thing, “**Father, those days are over.**” (Father Sretenovic laughing) So this is not the 1950s. We're not in a previous time in Church history; we are in a very particular, very critical time; just trying to survive. As a priest I have to be careful about what to expect and what simply to roll with and more times than not, I would say 95 to 99% of the time everything is beautiful. Of course with me there's that one percent of the time when all of a sudden, boom, you get hit with something and you think, Ahh, okay, well whatever - you just never know!!!

But with these things in mind, I was praying about it yesterday and in looking at the whole situation, I said my one longing in terms of the school, is that every single child at Our Lady Help of Christians might attend Padre Pio Academy. And I really had this longing in me because I think everyone would be so much better off, regardless of whatever problems or difficulties or struggles may come up along the way. So I truly believe that. And we have a principal who has been doing this for close to twenty-five years. Someone who has so much trust of the board and of so many of our teachers and our parents - that she is still here doing what she is doing for the love of God and for the souls of our children. I think that says something. And trust right now – “trust” I think is the big word because it's ironic that right now as I'm giving this announcement, within the last couple of weeks I have had a situation in which those who are very idealistic, those I've gravitated to over the years, actually broke my trust, and when you break someone's trust it's very difficult to get that back. And I will say that whereas some of the ideals I really, really like and cling to; at the same time compared with any difficulties I've ever had at the school - any disagreements or where something I hear I don't agree with, ultimately I'm still welcome back. Nobody's ever told me, “Father, you say that again and you're not teaching anymore”. There is a depth of charity that is there that maybe is not always immediately evident but something that we have – there is a respect for the priesthood that is there, otherwise I would not be teaching anymore probably. But there is something that is there that you cannot buy. It has to be earned over time and even after leaving for a few months in 2014 and coming back, and the fact that I was immediately welcomed back to teach. But without batting an eye I felt like It wasn't as though, Oh, gosh, I'm not trusted any more, I was welcomed right back. So there is something to be said for that and sometimes we so easily focus on the negative whereas the positive is staring us right in the face!

The epistle today is all about obedience, right? Both when it is easy and when it is difficult; when those we are dealing with are nice or when they are froward, it doesn't matter. In fact if anything, when we deal at a time when maybe somebody is having a bad day or whatever and they are froward, there is more to be gained from that and we ought not run from it. There is the cross waiting right there, the beautiful cross, the sacred cross.

So in our situation it is not always easy but it is what God wants. My prayer today is that when you reflect upon where you will be sending your children next year, that this will be what you want as well.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.