

**Homily for the 4th Sunday of Advent – Cycle C
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois
December 19, 2021**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

The Gospel passage from St. Luke (1:39-45) that we just heard for this Fourth of Advent tells the story of the Visitation, when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth. Although we commemorate the Visitation on its own feast day every year on May 31st, we recall that event on the Sunday before Christmas in anticipation of the birth of Our Savior.

The important detail that we should note in this reading is that both Mary and Elizabeth are pregnant. We are told that, “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’” Elizabeth then added, “For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.”

What Mary and Elizabeth knew 2,000 years ago is a fact ignored by abortion advocates today who claim that an unborn baby is not a living

human being. Recently United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor compared an unborn child to a brain-dead person or a corpse.¹ The fact that a United States Supreme Court Justice could make such an ignorant statement now in the 21st century is astounding and disturbing.

In a similar vein, Governor J.B. Pritzker this past Friday signed legislation into law that repeals the Parental Notice of Abortion Act, claiming that “reproductive rights [are] under attack across the nation.”² Well, nobody’s rights to reproduction are under attack. The only right that is under attack is the right to life.

Governor Pritzker’s signing of the deceptively titled “Illinois Youth Health and Safety Act,” which repeals the Parental Notice of Abortion Act, marks a dark and disgraceful moment in the history of the State of Illinois. Those legislators who promoted and voted in support of this legislation, and the Governor who signed this unjust law, have granted a five-part victory to evil in our state.

First, our government has granted a free pass to sex traffickers. Those who enslave young women and girls throughout our state can now even more easily than ever before cover up their crimes with impunity. Those in law enforcement and social service who fight so hard to combat this evil as

well as those young women and girls who are enslaved by evil forces in this industry have been dealt a demoralizing blow by our government.

Second, our government has violated God's will in stripping the authority and responsibility entrusted to parents. This legislative action violates the most fundamental rights and duties entrusted by God to parents to ensure the health and safety of their children. This is a right and responsibility that God grants, and which no government can take away. In attempting to do so, this legislation acts directly against God's will, which is the very definition of evil.

Third, our government has imperiled the children whom God has entrusted to their governance. The government rightly exercises its authority by establishing laws that protect minors from making life-altering decisions that they are not equipped to make, establishing laws that prohibit children from tanning, buying lottery tickets, buying cigarettes, and purchasing alcohol and tobacco. Minors cannot get body piercings without parental consent, nor can they undergo every other invasive medical procedure without parental consent. Removing the requirement for parental notification, our government has knowingly put our children in mortal danger and physical danger.

Fourth, and most grievous, our government has promoted and facilitated murder. Pope Francis has rightly called abortion murder and “hiring a hit man to solve a problem.” This most heinous offense against God and neighbor is now made more easily accessible to minor children than tattoos or getting their ears pierced.

Fifth, the government has provided evil the cover of darkness in which it thrives. The devil desires darkness and despises the light. It is striking how much this legislation does to provide cover, secrecy, and darkness over evil deeds.

Yes, there is much evil being perpetrated in our Statehouse, both literally and symbolically. Recently a satanic display was placed in the Rotunda of our State Capitol. As I said at the blessing of the Nativity scene in the Rotunda on November 30th, satanic displays should have no place in this Capitol or any other place. The First Amendment of the United States Constitution protects the free exercise of religion, but Satan worship is not a religion. The word “religion” comes from the Latin word, *religo*, to bind together. True religion binds people to God and to each other in faith. The Devil seeks to divide, not to unite, and the only thing that Satan worship binds its adherents to is the Evil One.

As Jesus said in the Gospel of John (8:44) about Satan, “He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the father of lies.”

We Christians believe that the Light will come and judge the deeds of men. We pray this day for a conversion of heart and a renewal of mind among those in authority who perpetrated this evil on our people. We pray solemnly this day also for the protection of the many children and families imperiled by this unjust law.

We should not be surprised that the death of innocent babies would accompany our celebration of Christ’s birth. Like King Herod who ordered the murder of innocent babies after the birth of Jesus, Governor Pritzker and his pro-abortion allies in the Democratic Party have condemned innocent babies to death. In 2019, Governor Pritzker signed the bill passed by the Illinois General Assembly that purports to declare abortion to be a fundamental right, while also declaring that an unborn baby does not have independent rights under the laws of this state. Now, Governor Pritzker and pro-abortion Illinois legislators have repealed the parental notification of abortion law. This is their Christmas present to us a week before Christmas!

Jesus was born in the midst of a sinful world precisely to save us from our sinfulness. Just as Our Lord and Savior came into this world 2,000 years ago to conquer sin and death, we who are His disciples must bring Christ into a world beset by evil, and in particular, into our State Capital here in Springfield, where much evil has been perpetrated in recent years.

Rather than give in to discouragement, we must be signs of hope. There are many good things that Catholics are doing in the world that people should know about, but are often unknown because they are ignored in the media. For example, the cover story of this week's issue of *Illinois Times* has the headline, "Where does the next meal come from? Lacking a coherent federal response, local entities step up to fight food insecurity."³ Amazingly, there is no mention of St. John's Breadline here in Springfield!

Between our Catholic Charities St. John's Breadline, Meals In Wheels program, six traditional food pantries and our Mobile Food Pantry program serving thousands in our rural communities, I do not think there is any other organization doing more to address hunger in central Illinois!

Also, a new survey from the Pew Research Center reports that the percentage of Americans who identify as Christians now stands at 63%, down from 65% in 2019 and from 78% in 2007. Meanwhile, 29% of Americans

now identify as having no religion, up from 26% in 2019 and 16% in 2007, when Pew began tracking religious identity. Buried in the last paragraph of the article is this encouraging piece of good news: **“Catholics make up 21% of the adult population, up 1 percentage point from 2019.”** Only the Catholic Church showed an increase, while every other religious group decreased.⁴

Even though the gain is modest, I hope this positive news encourages you to continue your efforts as missionary disciples to bring more people into the Catholic Church.

The overriding theme of this Fourth Sunday of Advent is a message of hope in the face of many challenges. “The spirit of Advent largely consists in living close to Our Lady during this time when she is carrying Jesus in her womb. We can think of the whole of our life as a somewhat longer *advent*, a time of waiting for that definitive moment when we will at last find ourselves with God forever. . . . There is no better way of preparing for Christmas, which is now so close, than by keeping Mary company, getting to know her and deepening our love and trust in her. Mary imparts a great joy to our souls, because when we turn to her, she leads us to Christ.”⁵

I pray that you have a prayerful Fourth Week of Advent as we approach this sacred season of Christmas!

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/249754/physician-blasts-sotomayor-for-dead-brain-people-comment-about-fetal-pain>

² <https://capitolfax.com/2021/12/17/pritzker-signs-repeal-of-parental-notification-act-into-law/>

³ <https://www.illinoistimes.com/springfield/where-does-the-next-meal-come-from/Content?oid=14478769>

⁴ https://www.wsj.com/articles/more-americans-left-religion-during-the-pandemic-11639494003?st=wm3ycimv06rq1h4&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

⁵ Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 1, p. 151.