

**Remarks for the Blessing of the Nativity Crèche at the State Capitol Rotunda  
Springfield, Illinois**

**November 30, 2021**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My fellow citizens of Illinois and my brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good for us to be here for this blessing of the Annual Nativity Crèche display at the State Capitol Rotunda in Springfield, exercising our constitutionally protected free exercise of our religious faith in the public square. I commend the Springfield Nativity Scene Committee for their diligence in protecting our right to the public expression of this privately-funded display honoring the birth of Jesus Christ, whose birth we honor on Christmas Day and throughout the Christmas season.

It is fitting that the display of the crèche and manger is placed here in the Rotunda of our State Capitol because Christ was born over 2,000 years ago not in a house of worship, a holy temple or some sacred shrine, but among the people in the ordinary circumstances of the everyday life of the poor. Similarly, the State Capitol is not a house of worship, a holy temple or some sacred shrine, but the seat of government that regulates the affairs of people in the ordinary circumstances of their everyday lives.

This representation of the birth of Jesus here in this secular place is a reminder that 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 this State Capitol, where much evil has been perpetrated in recent years.

In 2013, Governor Pat Quinn signed the bill passed by the Illinois General Assembly redefining marriage in contradiction of God's plan for man and woman. In 2017, Governor Bruce Rauner signed the bill passed by the Illinois General Assembly that provided for taxpayer funding of abortion. In 2019, Governor J.B. 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. Just last month, Illinois legislators voted to repeal the parental notification of abortion law. That measure now awaits action by the Governor. I urge Governor Pritzker to veto this legislation, which not only attacks the right to life of the unborn, but attacks the rights of parents.

Governor Pritzker often tells people to “follow the science.” In this case, I urge you, Governor Pritzker, to follow the science, and the science is clear that human life begins at conception. The United States Supreme Court tomorrow will hear oral arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* regarding Mississippi’s law that prohibits nearly all abortions after 15 weeks of conception. The law specifically identifies the state’s “interest in protecting the life of the unborn.” It notes that between the fifth and sixth weeks following conception, the unborn child’s “heart begins beating.” In approximately the eighth week the child “begins to move about in the womb.” At nine weeks, “all basic physiological functions are present” along with teeth, eyes and genitals. At 10 weeks, “vital organs begin to function.” At the 11<sup>th</sup> week, the “diaphragm is developing” and the child begins moving “freely in the womb.” By the 12<sup>th</sup> week, the unborn child “can open and close his or her fingers, starts to make sucking motions, and senses stimulation from the world outside the womb,” having “taken on ‘the human form’ in all relevant aspects.”<sup>1</sup>

Given these evils that have taken place in this building, we are reminded that our secular world still needs the salvation that the birth of our Savior offers to every human being.

It must also be said that 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 united, and the only thing that Satan worship binds its adherents to is the Evil One.

We know that what is good is not sinful and what is sinful is not good. Authentic love, then, never encourages sin or leads a person further into sin, but seeks instead to help him live a holy life. Love seeks to lead her further away from sin and closer to the truth. We also know that the truth is not a thing, but a person. Christ Jesus tells us, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). The one who truly loves seeks always to lead the one who is loved always closer to Jesus Christ, to him who is not only the Good Shepherd but is, as Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches us, Goodness itself (cf. John 10:11).

Love, then, does not tolerate sinful desires and activities but seeks to root them out because "it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth" (I Corinthians 13:6).

The Venerable Fulton J. Sheen put it this way:

Christian love bears evil, but it does not tolerate it.

It does penance for the sins of others, but it is not broadminded about sin.

The cry for tolerance never induces it to quench its hatred of the evil philosophies that have entered into contest with the Truth.

It forgives the sinner, and it hates the sin; it is unmerciful to the error in his mind.

The sinner it will always take back into the bosom of the Mystical Body; but his lie will never be taken into the treasury of His Wisdom.

Real love involves real hatred: whoever has lost the power of moral indignation and the urge to drive the buyers and sellers from the temples has also lost a living, fervent love of Truth.

Charity, then, is not a mild philosophy of “live and let live”; it is not a species of sloppy sentiment.

Charity is the infusion of the Spirit of God, which makes us love the beautiful and hate the morally ugly.<sup>2</sup>

When the Church teaches and proclaims what is moral and what is immoral, what is holy and what is sinful, what is right and what is wrong, what is just and what is unjust, she is met with opposition; evil never likes to be called out for what is. Yet in the face of such opposition, the Church continues to speak the truth because “love endures all things” because she does not teach her mere opinion, but the truth she has received from Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 13:7). Because it comes from the Lord and not from men, the Church can neither depart from the Gospel nor alter it to suit modern desires.

As we approach the celebration of our Savior’s birth, may this Christmas crèche in our State Capitol help us through God’s grace to drive out evil from our midst and help us all to grow closer to the One who is the incarnation of love, the one who is Goodness itself.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Andy Puzder, “This Abortion Case ‘Feels Different,’” THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, November 29, 2021; accessed online at [https://www.wsj.com/articles/this-abortion-case-feels-different-supreme-court-unborn-dobbs-jackson-womens-health-11638223308?mod=opinion\\_lead\\_pos6](https://www.wsj.com/articles/this-abortion-case-feels-different-supreme-court-unborn-dobbs-jackson-womens-health-11638223308?mod=opinion_lead_pos6).

<sup>2</sup> <https://btpen.wordpress.com/2013/03/27/fulton-j-sheen-on-tolerance/>