

**Homily Outline for Mass at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary
Saint Louis, Missouri
April 15, 2021**

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- I. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).
 - A. While that statement from today's first reading is true, it must be exercised with caution, prudence, and humility.
 1. Caution because it might be the devil speaking to you disguised as an angel of light.
 2. Prudence because you must weigh the consequences of your civil disobedience.
 3. Humility to make sure you are acting on principle and not on pride.
 - B. We must also consider the First Letter of the Apostle Peter that we read last week in the Office of Readings: "Because of the Lord, be obedient to every human institution, whether to the emperor as sovereign or to the governors he commissions for the punishment of criminals and the recognition of the upright. Such obedience is the will of God" (2:13-15).
 - C. So how do we reconcile these two passages?
 1. Presumption is that we are called to be good citizens, obeying civil laws unless they are contrary to divine law or canon law (cf. canon 22).
 2. Like the apostles, we can be called to challenge the civil or religious establishment.
 3. Before we act, we should make sure, by careful discernment, that the Holy Spirit is the one impelling us by consulting with spiritual directors or wise mentors, as well as honest examination of our motives, can help us do this.
- II. In today's Gospel passage from St. John, we hear, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him" (3:36).

- A. This has implications for our belief in the resurrection of the body, which is good for us to reflect on during the Easter season.
- B. To whom does the “resurrection of the dead” that we profess in the Creed refer?
1. Jesus taught that “all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29).
 2. Contrary to what the Church has taught through most of her history, in recent years some theologians and Christian denominations, such as the Unitarians and Universalists, have suggested that no one is in hell, but everyone will go to heaven. This is called universal salvation.
 3. Our Lord’s reference to “the resurrection of condemnation” indicates rather clearly that not everyone will go to “the resurrection of life,” but only “those who have done good deeds.”
 4. Jesus also states elsewhere in the Bible, “But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish” (Luke 13:3).
 - a. Someone followed up on that statement by asking Jesus, “Lord, will only a few people be saved?”
 - b. He answered them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough” (Luke 13:23-24). “How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few” (Matthew 7:14).
- C. We must also be aware of the consequences for evangelization if it is commonly accepted that everyone will go to heaven regardless of how sinful they have been and without ever repenting of their sins.
1. If I am going to heaven no matter how much evil I do in this life and I never repent of those sins, why bother going to church? Why follow the Ten Commandments? Why should I love my neighbor?
 2. Actually, the Catholic Church teaches that it is a sin against the First Commandment to believe that you will go to heaven no matter what you do in this life; that is called the sin of presumption, because the sinner presumes God’s mercy without repenting and asking for forgiveness.

3. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 2092), "There are two kinds of presumption. Either man presumes upon his own capacities, (hoping to be able to save himself without help from on high), or he presumes upon God's almighty power or his mercy (hoping to obtain his forgiveness without conversion and glory without merit)."

D. As Christians, we hear Our Lord's clear call to repentance and we pledge to put His teachings into practice in our lives with the help of His grace, that we too might share in the joy of His resurrection.

III. May God give us this grace. Amen.