

As I begin today's homily I want to make sure we don't get sidetracked by examples. I'm going to mention some current events and political happenings for the purpose of making a point. I'm not taking a stand on those issues or espousing a political view.

A conservative author recently wrote "The greatest female Jeopardy champion of all time is a man. The top female college swimmer is a man. The first female four star admiral in the Public Health Service is a man." Twitter suspended his account for publishing these statements and others, not because they were true or false but because of the subject they addressed.

Why do our attempts to right injustices such as police brutality or protesting what seemed to many unfair election practices, end in even greater injustices and lawlessness like trying to strip entire cities of police protection or breaking into the capital building?

Why do humanitarian efforts to, say, keep peace or feed the starving all too often end with our peacekeepers reviled as the oppressors and villains, and the food we sent ending up feeding a warlords troops?

Virginia, a fairly solidly Democrat state has seen fit to vote in Republican candidates because Democrat establishment of the state not just failed to, but refused to condemn a school board covering up the assault of young lady in a school restroom by a transgender male student, both initial assault and the cover-up were criminal acts. They compounded the problem by failing to acknowledge that parents have a right and responsibility to see to the education and upbringing of their children. Pundits claim that had the Democrats made the right noises on these three points they would have save their political bacon. It seems a no-brainer. Why didn't they?

Why can't we face difficult truths? Why is everyone else's bad behavior and ugliness always worse than our own? Why is it so difficult for us to own up to our own mistakes? Why do our best efforts to help or make something good happen often fall into hopeless shambles? Why can't we accept that certain things in this world are beyond our fixing?

Why? Because we lose sight of why He came among us and was baptized by John and died on a Roman cross. To sum it up in a sentence, Jesus came because we humans are flawed, broken sinners.

Our most progressive wisdom seeks to remove the injustice for this one, but its method creates injustice for these others. No matter how laudable the initial intention, we must question how wise and progressive we really are.

When the facts don't support our vision of the utopia we are attempting to build, we either manipulate the numbers or the wording so facts are no longer against us, or we simply ignore the facts. This is either incredibly foolish or incredibly arrogant; perhaps both and that's really frightening. Either way, if we are still that foolish or that arrogant, how far have we advanced?

The chieftains, warlords and local bullies of the past gave way to kings, czars, and emperors, generalissimos, despots, power brokers and dictators. Not much has changed in those arenas except the weaponry. And I am still far more willing to see your flaws and point them out than I am to look at my own.

My brothers and sisters, as much as some would like to think we have progressed beyond it, sin is as active in our world as are all the ancient human problems. We've made some progress, but in honesty, it's only a decent sized dent and it's limited to certain areas.

Please note that when I started to talk about why we have such troubles here and now, I switched to the language of "we" because to some extent all of us have bought into the modern progressive idea that we can fix our world by our own efforts. Well we can't. The progressive vision has failed. It isn't delivering on its promise. No "We can fix this world by ourselves" movement ever has.

The Christ came into our world to free us from sin and all the half attempts and broken dreams that go with it. Part of the freedom Jesus brings is to see clearly the mess we are in and which we keep making. Part of that clarity is the realization that until everyone is totally free of greed and arrogant pride and lazy sloth, and fear and lust and all the other things that make us treat others and ourselves badly, this old world isn't going anywhere except in the same pitiful circles. Jesus also came to make sure we clearly understand that God loves us in spite of how flawed and broken we are. That love, not our efforts, not even our best efforts, but God's love will make all the difference in overcoming sin. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan is another step in God rolling out his plan for that "difference" becoming reality. God's love for you will make all the difference. It's the only thing that will. God so loved the world that He sent His Only Begotten Son out of love for you.

This represents something of a new beginning just as the Baptism of the Lord was a new beginning. Beacons of Light isn't just about addressing the shortage of pastors, it's also about asking all of us to reconnect with our Catholic Christianity at the root. Part of this is getting a clear picture of what is and what isn't Christian and that has to begin in our own thinking and acting. This can be very challenging, but if we don't accept the challenge, we just go with the flow. The present flow in our culture is tending more and more away from Christ and Christianity.

[Many of the ideas in this homily stem from a book, [From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age](#). It is available in digital and paper formats on Amazon as well as from other sellers. This is book was listed as one of foundational documents for Beacons of Light. I recommend it for many reasons, one of which being, if you ever wondered why we need a "New Evangelization" and how to go about it, this book gives the first explanation that ever made sense to me.]

