

23<sup>rd</sup> Sun. Ord. Time (C) Labor Day Weekend  
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes  
September 3, 4, 2016

God is pro-choice! Now that should have gotten your attention! ..... because the phrase 'pro-choice' usually does! But it seems true .... God is pro-choice and always has been. Go to the Book of Genesis, the Adam and Eve story. The first couple had a choice ... 'to eat or not to eat', to become like God 'on their terms', or to do it 'on God's terms'. Later on in the Book of Deuteronomy (30:19) we find God being 'pro-choice' again. The Israelites had been in the desert for many, many years. Always guiding them and acting on their behalf, God sets their options before them. They know what life in the desert has been; difficult to say the least. So God reminds them of his commitment to them. He says,

*“Look, today I am offering you life and prosperity, death and disaster. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am laying down for you today, if you love the Lord your God and follow his ways, ..... you will live and grow numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the country which you are about to enter and make your own. But if your heart turns away, if you refuse to listen, if you let yourself be drawn into worshiping other gods and serving them, I tell you today, you will most certainly perish.... Today, I call heaven and earth to witness against you: I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live...”*

Pretty clear .... God is pro-choice! (granted, in a much different sense than we usually hear and understand this phrase.) This is my offer, says God .... you choose!

As we have been learning about true discipleship over the past weeks we have been given the choice of being genuine disciples of Jesus or not. But an interesting question sort of haunts me: do we really consider God in the decisions we make .... or simply run to God to help us after making a foolish decision ... one made without involving God's wisdom in the first place.

I am quite sure my thoughts come from the fact that next Sunday 13 of our young people will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. Most of them are probably not here, and will not be here. Matthew Kelly, a noted Catholic evangelist today, says that 75% of the young people who receive the Sacrament of Confirmation today will never be back in church..... except for a funeral or a wedding .... and maybe, (and he does say 'maybe') for Christmas or Easter. As we begin a new season of Faith Formation and preparation for First Sacraments (Reconciliation and Eucharist), the same can be said. We don't see many of these children/young people except for the weeks of preparation. How do I say this? The bottom is falling out .... God is simply not a factor in most of the decisions we make, and when we grow too old to carry this on, there will be many left to do it.

Is there any hope? Is there any Good News? “Yes, if .....”

Whether we realize it or not, human beings seek a wisdom beyond that achieved by reflection on human experience alone, and especially only our own experience. Whether we realize it or not, human beings seek to know the things of God, the mysteries of

heaven. A Scripture text that you may be familiar with because of hearing it at a funeral, is Ecclesiastes 3. Ecclesiastes is another OT Wisdom book:

*“There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.*

*A time to be born, and a time to die, ....”* You know the rest.

But at the end of that text it says, *“God has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timeless into human hearts, without them ever discovering,....”* This 'timeless' piece is none other than something of God Himself. It is the 'divine image' in which we are created, and we are restless until we acknowledge it. Why are so many so stressed today, so undecided today, so edge, so without peace .... because we are not acknowledging the place of God in our lives. We decide things without factoring in the wisdom of God.

As smart and sophisticated as we think we are, if you and I do not tap that 'piece of timelessness' that has been placed within us, we are among the most foolish of all. And, many today do not make any effort to do this. We make our choices, we make our decisions, with little reference to God. Today's First Reading says,

*“the deliberations of mortals are timid, and unsure are our plans.”*

At best, even the decisions we feel most secure about, are made through 'trial and error'. While we cannot discern completely the will of God for ourselves, nor for anyone else for that matter, we must not keep God out of the equation completely. And often we do. Influenced by the world in which we live, making God a piece of each of our decisions does not occur to us. Could this be why many of the decisions that we and others far more important than ourselves make end up being so misguided, even crazy? The wisdom we so sorely need is something that only God can bestow on us. **And God will bestow it on us if we ask.**

When students make decisions about college ..... which one and where .... is God a piece of this decision-making?

When adults make decisions about employment ..... change or not to change, move to upgrade or remain where we are

When families decide what activities to give their children

When families decide whether or not a planned purchase, vacation, job, type of school for their children should be made, is God a piece of that decision-making process?

Why is one baptized ..... if there are no plans to nourish the God-life that is begun?

Why does one step forward for Confirmation .... if there are no plans to rely on the gifts of the Holy Spirit received in Confirmation? and share them with the faith community that will support you?

Why does one bring a wedding to the Church, if there is no genuine recognition that the marital union is sacramental, and what that means. Sacraments are not tickets to some new level of heavenly space.

It is foolish, probably more foolish than anything else we do or don't do, to not figure God into our decisions. We know what God offers ..... now we must choose!