From Pontiff to Pew (continued):

full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love" (ibid.). From this it follows both that "from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care", renouncing "abortion and infanticide"; and that "the acts themselves which are proper to conjugal love and which are exercised in accord with genuine human dignity must be honored with great reverence" (ibid.).

The teaching of *Gaudium et Spes* on the conjugal and family community thus goes on to highlight the social function of the family, defined as "a school of deeper humanity" and "the foundation of society" (GS, 52), calling upon all those with social responsibilities, especially in the political and cultural spheres, to fulfil their duty to "work efficiently for the welfare of marriage and the family" (*ibid.*).

Dear friends, this task is more urgent than ever before. The Church is well aware of this, as shown by the pastoral concern of the Popes who have succeeded one another since the last Council, right up to the two Synodal Assemblies convened by Pope Francis, which were addressed again in recent days by the Heads of the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences. May the Holy Family of Nazareth enlighten us on our journey and protect families throughout the world.

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Oktoberfest - Please join us for an Oktoberfest celebration on **Saturday, October 31st** following the 4;00 PM Mass in the school cafeteria. There will be plenty of food and drink on hand (some in the tradition of the German celebration of Oktoberfest) for all to enjoy. It is a time for all to gather as we enter into the colder autumn months and to celebrate our community here at Visitation Parish. Admission is free and open to all. If you would like to bring a dessert you may do so; however, it is not required. There is a sign-up sheet in the main vestibule of the Church. We hope to see you then.

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WE CONTINUE TO NEED SOME PART-TIME TEMPORARY MAINTENANCE HELP AT THE CHURCH. This would include regular cleaning, and other day-to-day tasks required to upkeep the physical plant. If you are interested, please contact Fr. John by calling the church line. Thank you.

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St. Jude Annual Triduum - St. Clement Church will be having their annual Triduum to Saint Jude, patron of those in despair or in hopeless situations, will be on Tuesday, October 27th, Wednesday, October 28th, and Thursday, October 29th, with masses being celebrated at 6:30 PM each evening. In addition to the Triduum Mass on Wednesday, October 28th, at 6:30 PM, we will celebrate: "The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick". Those not being anointed are encouraged to attend the liturgy in solidarity and prayerful support of those receiving the sacrament.

From the Pastor's Desk

As a moral theologian, I was particularly moved by this Sunday's readings. The first reading is about morality in relationships – how we treat one another, but also and particularly about how to treat those who are without protections. The immigrants, orphans, widows are all without societal protections and God says "I will surely hear their cry." These readings teach us to be compassionate to those on the margins, but also the reality that it is precisely there that you encounter God. It is when we seek to be compassionate that we experience the compassionate, loving, nearness of God.

In the Gospel, Jesus ties his words to the Pharisaic teachings, demonstrating for us that all the law and prophets point to how to be in relationship with God, i.e., by being in relationship with one another. Living the law to its fullness of compassion is how we encounter the living God. In order to answer the call to be holy as God is holy, Jesus is saying we must be compassionate just as God is compassionate.

This call is not just reserved to this Sunday's readings, for expressing compassionate love in the four relationships that define us (God, neighbor, self, and world) is the way that we live up to our baptismal call as persons made in God's image and ever being formed into God's likeness (cf. Genesis 1:26-27). If you think about it, it is the core of our Eucharistic celebration, for Jesus the Christ demonstrated his love for God, for all humanity, and indeed the entire cosmos through the Paschal Mystery, the mystery of his Death and Resurrection which is both the cause of our salvation and the model for our moral life). At Eucharist, we are transformed into what we receive if we are open to the grace of God's loving friendship. Therefore , Eucharist must be the very center of our lives, not merely an obligation that we fulfil one day a week by gathering together for usually less than one hour.

Accordingly, I am inviting every member of Visitation Parish to reflect this week upon our Eucharistic identity. Are we the body broken and blood poured out for others just as the Lord has done for us? Can we make the Eucharist more central to our Catholic identity? We can do this by participating more actively, fully and consciously every time we gather to celebrate this saving meal. Perhaps we can participate in the Eucharistic

celebration more than merely on Sundays. Mass is celebrated almost every day every week. Is it possible that we could give the Lord more than an hour of our time in a 168-hour week? Even one additional day would be an incredible expression of love. Coming to Mass over our lunch hour (actually daily Mass is only one half hour) or on a Wednesday evening. Perhaps on Wednesday and or Friday, we could participate in the celebration of Eucharist followed by a period of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Perhaps you could think about it this way. Jesus' invitation to come and be a dynamic part of daily Eucharist reflects our daily experience. In order to remain alive, we need to nourish ourselves with life, drawing it from plants and animals that God has so graciously provided for us. Yet, to be perfectly honest, eating something that is no longer alive reminds us that we too, no matter how much that we eat, will one day have to face our mortality. On the other hand, when we partake of Jesus, the living and true Bread from heaven, we live for him. By offering himself completely, the Lord once crucified and now risen, delivers himself into our hands, and we realized that we were created to partake of God. Our hungry nature bears the mark of a need that is satisfied only by the grace of the Eucharist. As Saint Augustine once wrote, Christ is"*panis qui reficit, et non deficit; panis qui sumi potest, consume non potest:*" He is "bread that restores and does not run short; bread that can be eaten but not exhausted."[1] As noted by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Eucharist is the true, real and substantial presence of the Savior[2] who transforms bread into himself in order to transform us into himself. Living and life giving, the *Corpus Dominun*, the Body of the Lord, makes us, the Church into the Lord's Body.

My question is, why do we not take advantage of this great gift? I ask you again this week to consider the depths of this saving mystery. As you do, ask yourselves: Do give my whole heart and soul into the Eucharistic celebration? Do I sing and pray as I ought? With everything else that occupies my time (my phone, the internet, television, hobbies) could I not carve out an extra space in my life for the Lord and the celebration that truly gives me life? Blessings are yours to be had by living life to the fullest with our Eucharistic Lord…at Mass, adoration, or both. It

[1] Saint Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons*, 130.2
[2] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1413

is your choice and yours alone. May the Lord truly guide your decision.

Another thing that I would like to think about is your moral obligation to vote. With this in mind, I would like to share the reflection of Archbishop Coakley, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in view of election day, November 3, which is now just over a week away.

"In a time of deep political division, the temptation is to be discouraged and to not participate in the election process. But discouragement is not a Christian virtue. For citizens in a representative democracy such as our own, participation in public life – including voting – is both a right and a responsibility.

In honoring this civic duty, it is important to ensure that citizens not face unnecessary delays or complications in registering or exercising their right to vote. Together, we can contribute to the common good of our nation as faithful citizens by supporting free and fair elections.

I would ask all Catholics to put their faith before politics. The Church's contribution to the public life of a nation is not a political or partisan program; rather, it reflects our commitment to the dignity of every person, who is created in the image and likeness of God.

One of the great dangers of our moment is the belief that any criticism of 'our party' somehow strengthens our opponents. A well-formed conscience does not operate on those terms. Therefore, I encourage all to judge candidates and elected officials by their actions, not merely their promises, and how those actions promote the common good. We must reject rhetoric that appeals to fear, resentment, or division, and listen instead, to the Gospel call to love God and all our neighbors.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, bless our nation as we turn once more to elections, that we might respect the dignity of each person and promote the common good of all."

Clearly, we must recognize that voting is a great privilege and tremendous responsibility. In addition to becoming aware of the principles of justice that must inform our consciences in order to avoid partisan politics, see https://www.usccb.org/faithbeforepolitics we must also pray. Therefore, I would invite you to pray the following prayer of Saint Pope John Paul II to guide your decision making with regard to the upcoming election:

Immaculate Heart of Mary,



help us to conquer the menace of evil,

which so easily

takes root in the hearts of the people of today,

and whose immeasurable effects

already weigh down upon our modern world

and seem to block the paths toward the future.

From famine and war, deliver us.

From nuclear war, from incalculable self-destruction, from every kind of war, deliver us.

From sins against human life from its very beginning, deliver us.

From hatred and from the demeaning of the dignity of the children of God, deliver us.

From every kind of injustice in the life of society, both national and international, deliver us.

From readiness to trample on the commandments of God, deliver us.

From attempts to stifle in human hearts the very truth of God, deliver us.

From the loss of awareness of good and evil, deliver us.

From sins against the Holy Spirit, deliver us.

Accept, O Mother of Christ,

this cry laden with the sufferings of all individual human beings,

laden with the sufferings of whole societies.

Help us with the power of the Holy Spirit conquer all sin:

individual sin and the "sin of the world,"

sin in all its manifestations.

Let there be revealed once more in the history of the world

the infinite saving power of the redemption:

the power of merciful love.

May it put a stop to evil.

May it transform consciences.

May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the light of hope. Amen.

Mary, our parish patroness is truly our hope. I pray that though her intercession, you may both be drawn close to our Eucharistic Lord and form a conscience for faithful citizenship.

Fr. John

Post Scriptum

***A.C.T.S**.: This acronym coined by the USCCB stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. You can use the acronym to help you pray for issues you care about and for help in acting as a faithful citizen.*

***Adoration**: Praise God for his love for humanity, and for creating each human being with dignity. Express wonder for life and beauty, and the basic goodness of human beings.*

***Confession**: Express your sorrow for an issue – a collective or social sin of humanity – that is facing the world today. This could include poverty, abortion, environmental destruction, or another important social issue. Take a moment to also recognize how you may have participated in the collective sin or issue, perhaps by your failure to do something about it.*

***Thanksgiving**: Thank God for his forgiveness and for maintaining hope in the world and in humans despite our failures. Express thanks for the talents that God has given humans and the inspiration to use these talents to address issues like the one you have mentioned.*

***Supplication**: Supplication is another word for intercession, or asking. Ask God to help bring about a positive solution to the issue you have identified – for an end to the social injustice. Ask him to help you see how you are called to be involved in addressing the issue. Invite the Spirit into your heart to inspire you.*