

Homily
2AdventC
Dec. 6, 2015
St. Bernard Church

Today's Gospel introduces us to John the Baptist, whom Jesus called the greatest of the prophets.

John the Baptist, like all the prophets, had a following but ultimately fell into disfavor for speaking the truth, in his case about marriage, and was killed for his offense.

Prophets are normally not appreciated in their own time. They seem to look better in the rearview mirror, many years after they have come and gone, when their warnings have proven over time to have been right on target.

I'd like to suggest that one of our modern prophets is Pope Benedict XVI. More than any other person, he has captured very clearly and in few words the basic problems in the world and has proposed the solutions.

Pope Benedict, for example, has spoken in England, Germany and the United States to government leaders in those countries, and in each of these addresses he very concisely identified the most critical challenges of our time and how to overcome them. His comments about Islam have proven to be most prophetic.

Pope Benedict named two problems in our times which were at the top of the list of issues to which the Church, including the laity, needed to respond.

The first issue is the widespread belief today that faith is opposed to reason and science.

The second issue is related to the first, the commonly held attitude that there are no objective truths governing human behavior.

How do we respond to these popular ways of thinking?

Well, let's start with scripture.

Romans 1:20

Nature, if we use our reason to study and understand it, teaches us about God, who is the source of all creation.

To quote Pope Benedict, "We are not strangers in a random universe."

My oldest son

Trying to make up his own rules for living his life

There are objective rules in nature that you must follow.
Otherwise you don't survive.

Because we believe in the Creator and that his creation reflects His personality, the Catholic view is that we have nothing to fear from reason or science.

Good reasoning, good science, will always give us a greater knowledge of who God is.

Throughout the last 2000 years, many of the greatest thinkers in the world have been Catholic.

St. Thomas Aquinas, who was certainly know slouch when it came to intelligence, concluded that "Truth [and he meant all truth] is always from the Holy Spirit."

Some of the greatest scientists in the world have been Catholic priests, in fields such as astronomy, optics, civil engineering, genetics, botany, and chemistry.

Google "great catholic priests scientists" – you'll be surprised by what you find

If you want to have some fun with people you know who are atheists, tell them about Fr. George Lemaitre, (Le-my-tree) a priest from Belgium. What is especially remarkable about him is that he is the one who developed the "Big Bang Theory." When he presented his theory to a gathering of scientists in California in 1933, one of the scientists, Albert Einstein, remarked:

"This is the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened."

More recently, in 2008, the Templeton Foundation, which honors achievements engaging the questions of life and the universe, gave its annual prize, \$1.6 million, to Fr. Michael Heller, a Catholic priest from Poland, whose specialties are cosmology and philosophy. Fr. Heller has said, "Science is but a collective effort to read the mind of God."

The laws of nature inform us not only about scientific issues but also about human behavior, what is good, what is not good, how there can be order in our lives, what leads to disorder. Catholic teachings on good, evil, sexuality, marriage and so on are all based upon and consistent with the laws of nature, understood by and through the use of reason.

The laws of nature serve as the universal principles upon which any society must be governed. Without them as a foundation, whoever has the power can decide anything they want and impose it on everyone.

Where exactly does Jesus fit into all this?

One of the most amazing passages in all of Scripture is this one, from Colossians 1:15-17.

What does that mean?

If anything on earth is consistent with Christ, it will prevail. It will flourish.

If is not of Christ, it might survive for a while, maybe even for a long time, but eventually it will wither and die. It will go away.

The legal right to abortion has only a limited future. The same can be said about same-sex marriage. These so-called legal rights might last for decades or even centuries, but they will someday die out.

Some forms of government, even some forms of doing business, though taken for granted today and assumed to be good things, may have a limited future. We'll see.

There's so much more that can be said about these issues. The point I want to make today is that we need to be on our game, we need to be educated and prepared to address these issues as our society becomes more and more secular, more and more skeptical.

I want to close with this quotation, taken from a book written by a Catholic man who has devoted his life to serving the poor and especially to those who struggle with mental health issues:

“The rhythm of the universe is the heartbeat of Jesus.”

The universe has a heart. It has a pulse. With our mind and our spirit, we can discover that heartbeat now, but we will see and understand it fully only when we meet Jesus in his glory in the life to come.