

TOO MUCH "OF THE WORLD"
A Sermon for the Second Sunday after Epiphany, 2011
On the Text: The news of the year
By the Reverend Doctor Randolph Constantine

Today, I regret that I cannot give you a full message based solely on the Propers for this day, the Second Sunday after Epiphany, for which, as you just heard a few minutes ago, the Gospel lesson is St. Mark's account of the Baptism of Jesus. The reason for this is that the Reformed Episcopal Church requires her ministers to preach a sermon against abortion once a year. What's more, that sermon is to be preached either on the Sunday closest to December 28th, or on the Third Sunday in January. December 28th is Holy Innocents Day, the day on which we commemorate the children of Bethlehem who were slaughtered by Herod in an attempt to kill Jesus. The Third Sunday in January is the day which the REC designates as Sanctity of Life Day, except in years in which December 28th falls on a Sunday; when that happens, most REC ministers give this sermon on that Sunday.

Since I began my ministry in late 2007, I have given three such sermons; and I assure you it is not a pleasant task. Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ is far more pleasant than telling people about just how deep into the waters of sin and depravity mankind has sunk. In each of those I felt it was necessary to give you some statistics, and I'll do that today as well. They tell us just how low the world has sunk. Millstones were not needed to sink that low, but someday they may be wished for.

Jesus placed great value on little children, and it is in Matthew 18:1-7 that he tells us of that and of how some evil people might think a millstone would be a gift of mercy. We read: **At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them 3 and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!"**

"It is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!" In today's world, temptations and evidences of open sin come at us from all sides. We see it every day in the newspapers and on television. What we find hard to understand is the scope of it, of just how monstrously much of it there is.

We all know what abortion is; it is the deliberate killing of an unborn child; and as such, it is an act of murder – in direct violation of the Sixth Commandment: **Thou shalt do no murder.** So, on its face, abortion is a sin. It is not, however, unforgivable. There are many, many sins that are committed by everyone, in our hearts if not in actuality, that are terrible sins, but which

God will forgive, as St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 **9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.** St. Paul is talking to the Corinthian Church, to people who had committed grave sins that he says would have kept them from inheriting the Kingdom of God; but they had repented of their sins and were forgiven. They were now as spiritually clean as anyone can be who repents and intends to and tries to lead a new life.

The problem in America and in the rest of the world is that there are so many millions who think that abortion, and homosexuality and many other sins are not really sins; so they don't think there is any need for them to repent. That is part of the theme of this sermon: that it is the culture of the world, of society, that says that all these things that Christians call sins are really all right, that they really aren't sins.

To try to see something of the magnitude of the problem we have to look at, or hear, some horrible statistics. And the problem with those statistics is that they are almost always two or three years behind. The basic statistic for the US is that there have been about 1.2 million abortions every year in the past ten years, but the peak year was 1990 with 1.6 million. The rate was higher than 1.5 million a year each year from 1979 through 1992, and then began to taper off, but has now held steady at 1.2 million per year since 2004. The result is that abortionists in the US killed something more than 50.7 million babies between 1973 and 2008, more than four times the number Jews killed by Hitler's Holocaust. What is unconscionable is the country does not seem to have the spine to put a stop to it. Guess where I get these statistics? Mostly from the web site of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which is an adjunct of Planned Parenthood, which in the interests of truth-in-advertising should change its name to Planned Unparenthood. They are proud of these numbers and wish they were larger. The numbers world-wide are of course much larger, with about 46 million babies being killed every year.

What is astounding is that in the United States, 78% of all women who have abortions claim a religious affiliation, with 43% claiming to be Protestant Christians and 27 % claiming to be Roman Catholic. 8% claim to be of other religions.

General results on ethnicity are not what you might expect. For 2009, the population of the US is estimated by the Census Bureau to have been 302.9 million, of which 64.9% were whites, 9.8% were Hispanics, and 12.4% were blacks. That is only 87.1% of the population, but these three groups have 93% of the abortions, of which whites have 41%, Hispanics have 20%; and blacks have 32 %; with 7% coming from all other ethnic groups.

This might seem bad enough until you hear about a story that hit the newspapers of New York City on January 7th. The City Health Dept published its annual report on Births and Abortions in NYC. Here are the numbers: There were 214,454 pregnancies in NYC in 2009, and 87,273 of those were terminated by abortions; that's 41% of all those potential people who were legally killed before they could be born. But that wasn't bad enough. The City tried to hush

up the ethnic breakdown numbers because it turned out that almost 60% of all black pregnancies were terminated by abortion. Now this is not 60% of the 87,273 pregnancies; it is 60% of the number of black women who were pregnant, which is a number that was not given in the story I read. Even so, it does not speak well for the black community in NYC. The percentages of abortions by ethnic group for other groups are: Hispanics, 41.3%; Whites, 20.4%; and Asians, 22.7%.

Why is this? What is wrong with this country? For that matter, what is wrong with the world? The answer lies in one more statistic. Millions of women have been asked the reason they chose to abort their babies. The answer is sickening: 98% of all abortions happen because the woman either does not want the child or says that it would be inconvenient, **inconvenient** for her to have a child at that time in her life or career. The unwantedness comes most often because of sex selection, meaning the couple, or just the woman, wants a boy, but the woman is carrying a girl. The opposite situation occurred in another story that hit the papers and the blogs on January 7th of an Australian couple, who already had three children, all boys, who decided to abort the twin boys she was carrying. You see she had undergone In-vitro fertilization in hopes of having a girl and it hadn't worked out the way they hoped.

Whether it is the sex of the child or the inconvenience of having one, or of homosexuals wanting to have marriage redefined so that two men or two women can be married and have wedding ceremony, or of someone wanting a big house or a fancy car that he cannot afford, it all boils down to most of the people in the world screaming at the top of their lungs, **“I want what I want, and I want it NOW!, and the world has to give it to me and bless the fact that I want it.**

I wonder how many of you heard of what happened in Massachusetts on New year's Day, that the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, the Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw, officiated at a marriage ceremony in which he “married” two lesbians, one of whom is the Rev. Canon Mally Ewing Lloyd, the Canon to the Ordinary of the Diocese of Massachusetts, and the Very Rev. Katherine Hancock Ragsdale, who is the Dean and President of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. The story about this appeared on the Episcopal Church's official news service, Episcopal News Service on January 3rd. It was not the lead story of any day and was sort of hidden in middle of a column of stories. However, it bore the title, Massachusetts: Bishop solemnizes marriage of two female priests. It should be pointed out that Miz Ragsdale is the person I mentioned earlier last year as being the one who desecrated a pulpit by supposedly preaching a sermon in which she yelled, **“Abortion is a blessing, abortion is a blessing; repeat after me, let me hear you say it, abortion is a blessing!”**

I apologize for feeling it was necessary to tell you all this. I feel as if I should have issued anti-nausea pills to everybody. What we want to know is why does all this really happen? I think the answer is that Satan, and those he has deceived and misled have yelled louder and persevered in their effort to have behavior that God says is sin be called normal. No matter what I and a thousand other ministers say from their pulpits, there are thousands more saying Fornication is OK, Abortion is OK, What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, Wink, Wink. etc, etc.

The world does not want to believe that God created it and the entire universe just by speaking it into existence. The world does not want to believe that God gave us a set of instructions in the Holy Bible on how he would have us live, or that He gave us His only-begotten Son to die on the Cross for our redemption. The world does not like all those “Thou shalt nots” But then we know also that the world does not like the fact that this world will pass away either.

There is no place in the Bible where it says in so many words, “You must live in the world, but do not be *of* the world.” That sentence is a distillation of some things Jesus said in John 17 and that John says in the second chapter of his First Epistle: 1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions - is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

It is Jesus who speaks of “being of the world” in John 17:14-17 when praying to the Father about His disciples:

14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

What you have heard today about abortion and homosexual marriage and the general approval of sin is more than we want to hear or bear. It is too much “of the world”. We are called to fight against these evils even though it seems that we may not prevail. Our weapons are words and votes. I beg you to use them. God’s word is sharper than a two-edged sword. If enough people use God’s word and pray, we can bring this country back into Gods favor, and He will heal this land. Let us pray without ceasing.

AMEN