L.I.G.H.T. FAMILY AWARENESS DAY

OCTOBER 28, 2012

INTRODUCTION:

Why are we doing this day? It all started with the sexual abuse scandal in the church some time ago. From that terrible experience, the American Catholic bishops saw the need for a renewed and deeper appreciation of God’s gift of the human body and of the importance of our respecting the body and the life of each person.

So in each diocese every year all programs of faith formation are required to include a segment on the sacredness of the human body and on proper respect for it.

At St. Catherine’s we have done that in different formats each year. Today’s program is a different format. Our purpose in this group will be to look at what the church teaches us about the sacredness of life and all the issues related to that sacredness, including the sacredness of human sexuality and related issues.

GOD’S GIFT OF LIFE

You’ll recall how at our September session we focused on God as creator/Father… the source of all life; and how the source of all life and creation is God’s powerful love… so great it could not be contained… that God simply had to give life because that is what love does by its very nature.

So, as Catholic Christians, rooting ourselves in the creation story from Genesis, we focus on all creation and life as a gift from a loving God. We present God as full of loving energy that is so great it cannot be contained, so God creates persons in the divine image who can enjoy, appreciate, respond to and pass on the loving, creative, life-giving energy that makes God who God is.

We speak of God as creating freely out of love and instilling the freedom-to-love in the human heart and mind because loving freely makes us most like God, makes us more and more in the image of God.

We speak of our being made in God’s image and reflect on how we can be like God: making choices that are loving and life-giving rather than self-serving and deadly to ourselves and others. We speak of the sacredness of life and creation. We speak of how we can imitate the actions of God as loving creator who wants what is best for all creation.

A term that is used to describe our role in life is the term “co-creator.” God has created us with the power to give life. But we are to do that always in partnership with God (“co”); we don’t do it on our own. And we do it in the manner and from the loving stance that God does it.

Once life is begun, we treat it reverently. We protect it from harm. We nourish it and help it to grow so that it reaches its full potential. These are the responsibilities we have as co-creators with God.

Of course the other model we have in all this is Jesus. He saw life as sacred and spent his life helping people to see their lives as God’s gift to them; as something to hold sacred.

Jesus hands on to his followers (us) the mission to continue promoting the sacredness of his Father’s gift of life. We are to be co-creators, handing on and “duplicating” what God did “in the beginning” and has been doing ever since.

ISSUES RELATED TO GOD’S GIFT OF LIFE

It’s one thing to believe in life as God’s gift and to want to respect it as such. But sometimes the circumstances of life leave us uncertain about the best ways for us to respect and us

God’s gift. For that very reason, the church has developed teachings about the gift of life and about specific issues that arise in our personal lives and in the social context of the society we are a part of. The church roots itself in the scriptures when it teaches and then applies the values contained in the scriptures to specific issues that arise over the centuries. The church’s teaching on basic matters remains constant but its application in specific circumstances and over time develops and gets nuanced as new insights emerge from science and from the deepening of faith in the community.

So we will look now at issues related to life and consider how the church looks at these issues and what our response to them is.

DISCUSSION

Use the graphic of an umbrella emblazoned with the words, “God is the creator of all life; what God has created belongs to him.” Invite participants to “name” the spokes using a contemporary problematic issue related to life (e.g., murder, abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, substance addiction, etc.)

Then using hand out sheets with the graphic, invite people to discuss what they understand the church’s response to these issues to be and to name the reason for the church’s response.

Participants are invited to name additional issues not yet presented.

(contraception; in vitro etc.)

Questions for discussion:

--In what way does the church’s stance seem on target to you?

--In what way does the church’s stance seem lacking?

--Other questions about these or other issues

CONCLUSION

Being co-creators with God and responsible for maintaining and fostering the sacredness of life is an awesome responsibility. But it is ours. Fortunately we are not left to our own devices to carry it out. We have the gift of Jesus’ Spirit to strengthen and guide us. We have the church to enlighten and support us. We have our own prayer to keep us honest and clear and faithful so that we can do our part to help God’s dream for us come true.