

13th Sunday (C)

26th June 2022

‘Putting-off/Off-putting’

1Kings 19: Elisha follows Elijah

Ps 15: ...

Gal 5: *be careful, or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence.*

Lk 9:51–62: *Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*

In April 1976 my parents, my brother and sister and I moved into our house in St Albans. And in the garden there was a rusty monstrosity of black corrugated iron, which called itself a shed or garage. It was truly an eyesore, and my Dad confidently proclaimed in 1976 that “that must go!” Well, it finally got demolished about 25 years to the day from when we moved in! The increase in the light in the garden, and the improvement! — it made us wonder why on earth we hadn’t done it years before!

We’re all pretty good at putting things off, aren’t we? Finding other things to do instead of getting down to the unpleasant or challenging jobs! If you’re anything like me, you can actually start several things in one morning, and actually have the indiscipline to finish none of them, leaving them all hanging.

The people we hear Christ meeting today all sound

pretty much like us, too: people who are willing to begin, but not always to finish: perhaps not quite sure how far to take their faith in Jesus. They’re all drawn to Him, but His question is, *Are You prepared to live with Me in a radical way? Why put off a wholehearted commitment?* His examination of them is quite challenging, almost off-putting, even! Look, you’ll have “nowhere to lay your head,” / you’ll have to “leave the dead to bury their dead,” / you’re not fit for the mission if you start to look back!

Sometimes, perhaps, the more-difficult elements of Church teaching can seem like that — almost off-putting, something we’d rather not think about ... Sometimes we might even find them ‘hurdles’ in the way of belief. But God knows what is good for us, and the difficult bits of Christ’s teaching for each of us are often the parts of our life that still aren’t being lived in accordance with our faith. Why will we go so far and no further? Why do we put off the task of bringing the messy bits of our lives into the light? The longer we leave them, the more we’ll regret never having tried to get rid of them earlier. To live fully

in accordance with Christ's teaching will make us holier people, and happier in the long run, even if it means a challenge today. We should find time to research, understand, and really embrace those teachings of the Church that are true, but which we are struggling to accept.

In this regard, in our navigating the deep and holy challenges that beset us as believing Catholics, I don't think we can ignore, even here in London, the seismic event that occurred in the USA on Friday, the over-turning of the 1973 *Roe vs Wade* judgment of the Supreme Court, re-setting the presumption of law and constitution in favour of the right to life. Even as Catholics, even with our essential pro-life mentality imbued in us as believers in the sanctity of life from conception, yet living in a Western culture where abortion is so rife, we can all-too-easily absorb the attitudes of society around us. We've seen, in the past 48hrs, how umpteen celebrities, politicians, sportswomen, have come out to condemn the Court's carefully considered judgment, and we can be badly affected by that tidal wave of media bias, and forget that

Christ was always on the side of the little ones, the poor and the children. It is absolutely the case, evidenced by His never accepting the easy route, or that of the powerful or rich, and His always championing the more difficult but truer path, that the divine heart of Jesus would be a pro-life heart, loving and willing life for all whom He has created.

So: I think it would be good to hear this morning, therefore, the full statement of the US Bishops' Conference as they reacted to Friday's news.

USCCB Statement (24th July 2022)

“This is a historic day in the life of our country, one that stirs our thoughts, emotions and prayers. For nearly fifty years, America has enforced an unjust law that has permitted some to decide whether others can live or die; this policy has resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of pre-born children, generations that were denied the right to even be born.

“America was founded on the truth that all men and women are created equal, with God-given rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This truth was grievously denied by the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe*

v. Wade ruling, which legalized and normalized the taking of innocent human life. We thank God today that the Court has now overturned this decision. We pray that our elected officials will now enact laws and policies that promote and protect the most vulnerable among us.

“Our first thoughts are with the little ones whose lives have been taken since 1973. We mourn their loss, and we entrust their souls to God, who loved them from before all ages and who will love them for all eternity. Our hearts are also with every woman and man who has suffered grievously from abortion; we pray for their healing, and we pledge our continued compassion and support. As the Church, we need to serve those who face difficult pregnancies and surround them with love.

“Today’s decision is also the fruit of the prayers, sacrifices, and advocacy of countless ordinary Americans from every walk of life. Over these long years, millions of our fellow citizens have worked together peacefully to educate and persuade their neighbours about the injustice of abortion, to offer

care and counselling to women, and to work for alternatives to abortion, including adoption, foster care, and public policies that truly support families. We share their joy today and we are grateful to them. Their work for the cause of life reflects all that is good in our democracy, and the pro-life movement deserves to be numbered among the great movements for social change and civil rights in our nation’s history.

“Now is the time to begin the work of building a post-*Roe* America. It is a time for healing wounds and repairing social divisions; it is a time for reasoned reflection and civil dialogue, and for coming together to build a society and economy that supports marriages and families, and where every woman has the support and resources she needs to bring her child into this world in love.

“As religious leaders, we pledge ourselves to continue our service to God’s great plan of love for the human person, and to work with our fellow citizens to fulfil America’s promise to guarantee the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all people.”

We heard in the Gospel today how Jesus speaks to our heart and challenges us: *you want to follow me, I know; but how much? draw from me the courage to stop putting off the decision to live a more demanding Christian life.* So, we mustn't be satisfied with living *just* half the teachings of the Church; we must 'grasp the bull by the horns' and choose to live by them all. Anything that's worth doing is worth the challenge — that's what Jesus strikingly urges His followers today. We can't be half-baked Catholics, choosing from the menu of belief the bits that suit us, and sort-of ignoring the bits that remain difficult. Christ doesn't mind if we acknowledge we find it hard — He'll give us grace to help us through the hardships, and will forgive us if we fall short again, even time and time again. But He can't help us if we stubbornly refuse even to take up the challenge of living the whole faith, demands and all. *Jesus, lover of our souls, lover of all humanity, shield in the battle and defender in our weakness, help us to live courageously the whole truth, the whole faith, with You alone as our teacher and guide.*