

This past Saturday some of you went to the pro-life march, where a number of Catholic leaders and victims spoke, gave testimony and rallied for the unborn.

One of the most difficult issues of our times!

Based on available state-level data, approximately 893,000 abortions took place in the United States in 2016 down from 1.3 million in 2000.

The question today is: Should the Church be involved in issues such as abortion? We all have our opinions on how Church should be.

Some say, "I come to Church to pray and then, when I hear our priests or deacon address current national issues from the pulpit that we hear on TV, I am upset."

For others, especially the younger generation, Church is not addressing social issues enough, and is not a relevant institution any more.

One of our young adults said, "Every day we see a world suffocated by poverty, and racism, and violence, and bigotry, and hunger; and in the face of that stuff, you get awfully, frighteningly quiet. We wish you were as courageous in those fights, because then we'd feel like coming alongside you."

So I asked myself, "What would Jesus do? Or what did Jesus do?" How did Jesus deal with synagogues and Temples?

We have a number of passages in the Gospels that give us an understanding of this question. We have one today. The Gospel of today speaks about Jesus engagement with a man with an evil spirit.

At age twelve, Jesus was in the Temple of Jerusalem arguing with the elders and leaders about God and how a Temple should be. As He began his public ministry, he went into the synagogue and addressed the people in words that sounded like the "I have a dream" speech by Martin Luther King. He started His words, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me. He sent me to preach glad tidings to the poor, liberty to captives."

Just think of the word "captive" and what comes to your mind? Who are the captives in our world? Hostages of war? Refugees on the run? And then he said "set prisoners free."

"Prisoners"- people who break the law" He did not say He just came to pray with us and spend quiet meditation.

Let me first address an encounter Jesus had with a woman in the synagogue. This is how Luke describes the incident. "And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit and she was bent double and could not straighten up at all. And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your sickness.' And He laid His hands upon her and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God. And the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the multitude in response, there are six days in which work should be done. Therefore, come during them and get healed and NOT on the Sabbath day.

Jesus does three things that day. Jesus had unmasked and confronted error that day. It had to do with a wrong understanding of worship or Sabbath. The goal of Sabbath or worship is to do good and to save. If words and prayers do not lead to good deeds, it is a meaningless worship. And that is exactly what he does.

He heals and saves the woman bound by Satan for 18 years.

Jesus unmasked and confronted demon that day. The demon in the worshipper shouted out. "You have come to destroy us."

Leave us alone! Just say your prayers and leave. In the Gospel he commanded Satan and said, "Quiet, come out of him." He silenced the voice of Satan.

And then He did the most important thing. He unmasked their false religion and wow...He did.

He calls them hypocrites because that's what they are and all advocates of false religion are hypocrites. Why? Because they don't know God. They don't know the truth. They are really the tools of Satan. It's a terrible thing to say, but that's what He did.

You're a phony, He said. "This woman is a daughter of Abraham. She a Jewess,. "She's one of your own people." This is not a Gentile. "This woman, a daughter of Abraham, as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years," Jesus says, emphasizing the terrible duration of this suffering, "should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" Translate that to the suffering humanity of our times.

Shouldn't the Church reach out to them on the Sabbath as Jesus did? Whether it is the unborn, the abused, the immigrant or the homeless?

What would our country look like if a Pastor named Martin Luther King remained quiet in the face of slavery and injustice?

Or if Archbishop Romero did not speak out against the soldiers and the government who were attacking the poor in his country. Romero used his sermons to call for peace. Jesus would in fact hit the public squares and plaza to defend and save the downtrodden, the accused and the sinful.

Remember the scene of the woman caught in the act of sin? How Jesus challenged the Mosaic Law and transformed it? The question is, "Can we stay quiet and say nothing about the burning issues of our times?"

Every human decision has a moral component. Every human action has a moral factor. We must absolutely stand up and speak up. His speaking up took Jesus to the cross. As someone said, "If you're going to be a Christian, you'd better look good on wood."