



BLESSED SACRAMENT LUTHERAN CHURCH

“I would advise no one to send his child where the Scriptures are not supreme. Every institution that does not unceasingly pursue the study of God’s word becomes corrupt. Because of this we can see what kind of people they become in the universities and what they are like now.” — Luther “Three Treatises”

Dear Saints,

2 Jan 2022

Our meditation this Sunday, the first of the “New Year,” finds Jesus, aged twelve, in the Jerusalem Temple. This event from Luke 2 brings to mind a billboard celebrating the Virgin Mary full-term birth of God’s Messiah, Jesus. Our own Christmas baby, born at 12:25 on 12/25 elicited much praise and thanksgiving for his safe delivery and his mother’s well-being. This child’s happy birth brought to mind an unspoken reality: bearing a child and birthing a baby comes with risk. It’s a risk largely forgotten due to the genius of modern medicine nearly eradicating all associated fear.

But what we celebrated as the beauty of family enlargement within the bonds of Holy Matrimony (intensified by *the* nativity season itself), also goes by the name of “a woman’s right over her body” in domains less God-fearing, as if the child were an alien “growth” or “cancer” needing eradication. Therein lies today’s greatest risk in bearing a child, namely the baby’s in-utero survival in the face of a supposed Constitutional right. Hence, the need to raise our voice for the life of unborn human beings dehumanized as mere growths. A baby’s presence within what was created as the safest conceivable domain for human development—the womb of their own biological mother—now teeters on the sharp edge of death having his/her existence as a human being terminated by whimsical choice with the coercion of societal revolutionaries. Fathers of such children, too, freely abdicate all such parental responsibility on the basis of Constitutional justification: the right to abort the life of a prenatal child.

Celebrating the Messiah’s birth, the Virgin’s nobility, St. Joseph’s integrity, indeed the Holy Family itself, and all births in our parish stands a protest against a culture of death. We really can’t make too much fuss over the birth of Jesus and, comparatively, the birth of Wiley and any babies born in our parish and communities. Both testify to the Gospel of the God of light and life.

In that vein, and with the annual Right to Life March in DC in three weeks, I have amended a sermon by Rev. Dr. Christopher Esget, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA:

“This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live” (Acts 7:19). “So that they might not live.”

That's the first martyr, Stephen. Recounting the slaughter of Hebrew babies, Stephen uses an interesting expression. "So that they might not live."

It's the same expression used in today's epistle: "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things." "Who gives life." It's all built on the word *Zoē*—like the girl's name *Zoe*, or *zoology*. You go to a zoo to see living things. When that word is used about humans, it means a decision about leaving someone alive. Pharaoh exposed the Hebrew babies, "So that they might not live." He didn't leave them alive. But whenever it means to give life, God is the subject, the doer. "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life." Man cannot give life, we can only let live—or not let live, a.k.a. murder. Only God can give life. Only God has the power of life in himself. St. Irenaeus said, "God makes, man is made." *Deus facit, homo fit*.

That's the problem, that we have forgotten we are made. Made *by God*. Yes, yes, you believe in creation. But don't run so quickly past it. Psalm 100 hints at the implications: "Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves."

The godless philosophy of our age has cast aside God for the myth of mutation. And make no mistake, that's not science, that's philosophy masquerading as science. "It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves"—but we ourselves cast aside God with every act of covetousness. We rebel against our Father when we calculate how much money a child will cost, as though He who gives life will not give us our daily bread. We rebel against our Father when we look at evil images, as though a human body is an object to be used and discarded. We rebel against our Father when we worry about tomorrow, as though He does not order our days.

When we put off praying, we confess, "He has not made me, but I make myself." With every thoughtless bite of food; with every evening that ends without confession and thanksgiving; with each consent to greed, gossip, revenge, lust; with every lie we believe *the lie*, that we can be as God. In a thousand small, insidious ways, our lives say, "It is not He who has made us, but we ourselves."

The problem is not abortion. Abortion is the symptom of the problem you and I have. We have lost God as maker. And with that loss, we have forgotten that we *are* made, that we stand as recipients of His life, under His ordering and stewards of His gifts. The culture of death infects us all.

Into this culture of death, into this world of death, steps Jesus. In Him was life. That familiar passage in John's gospel about Jesus, "In Him was life," can in fact be translated this way: "That which has come to pass in Him was life."

What in heaven does that mean? It means that for God, life is not a static thing. It's not a *thing* at all, as though we could find and possess life the way we might take hold of a basketball or a burrito. Life is not a thing, but in God it is an activity, a continual self-giving. Life is almost, then, a verb, an action, like love.

The things that have come to pass in Jesus is His self-giving. He becomes a fetus in Mary's womb; He becomes a crying infant, cold and hungry; He becomes a desert wanderer, starving and tormented by demons; He becomes the subject of slander and spitting; He is whipped, and pierced; He is laid in the tomb. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. That's where life is found: in the crucified Jesus.

Every one of us is called to be a confessor. Who do you say Jesus is? That's your confession. Are you one of His disciples? That's your confession. Today we don't confess that we are against abortion. We are, of course. But that's not quite it. Today we don't confess that we are pro-life. We are, of course. But that's not quite it,

either. Today we confess that God gives life to all things. God makes, and we *are* made. He makes life, and we leave alive.

Like the Hebrew midwives, we cannot stand idly by when pharaoh “[exposes] babies, so that they might not live.” We have an obligation to the victims of society. It is not enough, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, to bandage the wounds of those crushed by the wheel of injustice; “we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”

In the March for Life, and all year long, we demand an end to the injustice of abortion. We demand an end to the injustice of human trafficking, pornography, slavery, and the separation of children from their parents. But we do so as confessors. We confess that we are sinners, great sinners, with the culture of death flowing in our veins and pulsing through our corrupted brains. And we confess that only in Jesus is the life we need.

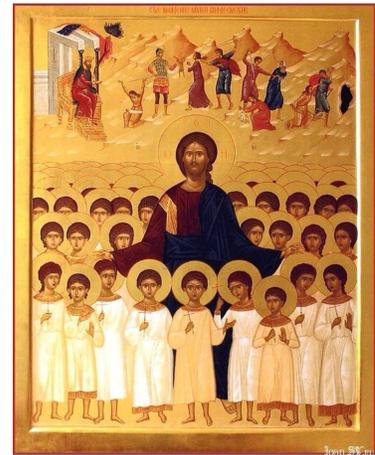
“[One] man dealt treacherously ... making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.” But another Man has come. The things that have come to pass in Him are life. He makes, and in Him, you are made alive.



St. Stephen, Protomartyr



St. John the Evangelist



The Holy Innocents

Jan. 2	Second S. a. Christmas	1 Kings 3:4–15	Psalm 119: 97–104	Eph. 1:3–14	Luke 2:40–52
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Second Sunday after Christmas 2 Jan 2022. Color: White. Divine Service 1. Processional Hymn, 363. Hymn of the Day 366; Psalm 119.97-104 chanted responsively; Eucharistic Hymn, 376; Recessional 387. Sermon: Luke 2.40-52 “In My Father’s House.”

- * Augsburg Academy: The Parable of Luke 15, Lesson 11: “The Lost Sheep”
- * Confirmation Catechesis, Lesson 4: 6 Jan. Thursday 3:25pm at Classical Christian Academy
- * Meal Tree for the Drake Family (upon the arrival of Baby Drake on 26 Dec @ 11pm). Melinda to send sign up email.

Prayers: For the Pickering family, mourning the death of dear friend Allen. For the Drakes as they adjust to caring for baby Wiley. For our children returning to school. For Suzanne making a recovery after injury and an upcoming surgery. For Colton’s family.

Λόγος & Lager

Theological Talk for Thirsty Thinkers

Sat. 15 Jan @ 6:30pm

Hosted by Mike & Julia Pond
7589 W Carnie Rd, CdA

Presentation & Discussion:

**“The Four Cups of Communion:
Body, Blood and Subversion”**

Beverages provided & BYOB

ΔψΩ (Jn 19:28)