

15th Saturday Ordinary Time “A Triumph for Bruised Reeds and Smoldering Wicks.”

St Michael Building Blessing Mass

Bishop Frank Schuster

Peace be with you. Again, it is an honor to be with you this morning to celebrate Mass and to bless a building that was recently purchased that will add to the good ministry here in Olympia.

In our first reading we have the prophet Micah. We do not hear from him very often in the liturgical cycle. He is one of our minor prophets that we typically encounter every three years on the 4th Sunday of Advent. He is the prophet who prophesized, “Thus says the Lord: you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me the Messiah.” That was an important prophecy; however, you must understand that Bethlehem was a little speck of a town, an outskirt suburb of Jerusalem really. For us, it would be like God saying, “From you Tumwater shall come the Savior”. Who knew?

This morning, however, he goes into detail about who the Lord is saving us from. He says, “Woe to those who plan iniquity, and work out evil on their couches; in the morning light they accomplish it when it lies within their power.” Not to sound too jaded, but that sounds to me like a good description of some of our government officials here in Olympia. If you look at the legislative agenda, it is amazing how much time many of our representatives and senators spend on couches dreaming up ways to strengthen policies that promote what Saint Pope John Paul II called a culture of death. Not all of them, but too many. If they spent just a quarter of that time working on policies that promote life and family, how much more wonderful would our state be?

Micah in our first reading matches well of course with our Gospel reading’ description of the Pharisees. The one job the Pharisees had was to strengthen people’s relationship with God and community. Here they are spending all their time plotting how to put the Son of God to death and causing division among the people.

As Church, if we are true to the Gospel, we cannot stay out of the so-called culture war. In fact, whether we want to or not, we often find ourselves caught in the middle of the culture wars and can often feel bruised by it. However, we take courage from Jesus’ reference to the Prophet Isaiah, “A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench until he brings justice to victory.” Jesus’ words are consoling and give us hope because for two thousand years, many different cultures have tried to silence the Catholic Church, and yet we are not only still here, we are also growing. There are presently over 1.4 billion Catholic. Think about that. Only a few billion to go. When Jesus says to Peter that

the gates of hell will not prevail over the Church, despite all our sins as individuals in the Church, Jesus' promise remains unshaken.

I mention all of this because, as we bless the building that this parish has purchased for the purposes of proclaiming and living the Gospel, the blessing we will be performing today marks a victory in the life of the Church because we are taking a building where, in part, a culture of secularism and even dehumanization sometimes reigned and by God's grace, we are transforming it into a place where the Gospel, sanctity of life, and the care for souls will now be championed, celebrated, and nurtured.

And so, as we approach the altar today, let us give thanks to God for the precious gift of life and gift of faith that makes life meaningful. Let us give thanks for vitality and growth of St. Michael and St. Edward parishes that necessitate having an additional building. And let's give thanks that this building will now be transformed and blessed by God to become what we hope will be a beacon of hope.