

**Homily Resources 1st Week in Lent B Sunday, 18 February 2018**  
**Readings: 1<sup>st</sup> Gen 9:8-15, Psalm 25, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1 Pet 3:18-22, Gospel – M ark 1:12-15**

**Our faith, our Scripture, our Liturgy, our Christian life makes us healthy  
not sociopaths, like the shooter at the High School in Parkland, Florida**

**1. Central Thought:** While the seventeen students killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida were victims of a pathological, sociopathic attacker, we can see in our readings for this morning how our faith forms and protects us and our culture from the development of such disordered persons. The Catholic faith is the answer to this problem.

**2. Key study: *The Sociopath Next Door* by Martha Stout, ph.d.** Martha Stout makes the remarkable claim that one in twenty-five individuals in our culture is a sociopath. What is a sociopath? The author says:

“This means essentially that they do not have a conscience. It is not that this group fails to grasp the difference between good and bad; it is that the distinction fails to limit their behavior....Without the slightest blip of guilt or remorse, one in twenty-five people can do anything at all” (p.9)

We should note that since the shooting in Parkland, as of last Friday, there had been another 22 such planned shootings averted. This is a serious and growing problem in our society. We should consider the causes. Just think in our local High School in Brownsboro. If we have 1200 students, there could well be 48 sociopaths among the student body itself.

3. The causes of sociopathy are complex but Dr. Stout identified three major cultural influences in our society that play an important role in the development of a sociopathic personality including *“impulsivity, irresponsibility, and lack of remorse* (lack of a sense of guilt for what one has done).

4. When I read this I immediately thought, “We as Catholics have the answer to this. One thing we can really do well is develop the conscience and a sense of sorrow for sin!” Especially our Lenten disciplines prepare us to be mature, responsible and stable. Let’s see what our readings can show us.

5. The first reading involves God promising a covenant to Noah and his family after the flood.

**First question: Is our faith and our Scriptures real?** We must deal with current public debate such as Joy Behar on ABC’s, The View. She criticized V.P. Pence’s faith and the fact that he listens to Jesus for guidance. She mocked his statement and called his faith a “mental illness.” Now there can be crazies within the faith community. Every so often someone comes along and claims to be Jesus himself. But Pence would appear to be on solid ground. He was raised Catholic and then became Evangelical Christian. But we must decide if our faith, its sources, and its practices are valid and helpful or the sign of some kind of sickness. Many secular liberals believe that anyone who needs help dealing with sin is sick. I would respond that those who deal with sin through religion are the most healthy and those who deny that we need help and think that they can make it on their own are living in unreality and untruth.

**6. This reading is after the Flood.** Why did God send the flood? Because the world had become so evil that he decided to destroy it. Any Christian would know that God will punish evildoers and reward those who do good (See Heb 11:6-7). Those evildoers probably exhibited all three of Stout’s qualities for sociopathy:

*impulsivity, irresponsibility and lack of remorse.*

Knowing that there is a God who will judge us, test us, and punish us promotes responsibility and restrains impulsivity. Knowing this helps to control us and our passions. This is why regular attendance at Mass, regular Bible study, and regular participation in CCD and adult classes is so important. We are continually learning God’s truth and God’s consequences.

**7. Furthermore, the covenant with Noah is the first time that “covenant” is mentioned in the Bible (6:18, 9:9).** God’s promise of a covenant is for the protection of Noah’s family and for all who survive the flood. It indicates a deep and loving relationship between God and those of the covenant. In this covenant, as we used to say, “God gave Noah the rainbow sign. No more water, the fire next time.” If we are Christian and people of the covenant, we have deep relationships of community with one another and with God. Sociopaths usually lack any deep, caring relationships.

**8. The Responsorial Psalm is a call to obedience,** not to oneself nor to one’s potentially neurotic or sociopathic desires but to the Words of God:

“Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.” “Teach me your paths.”

It is not I who is wise but God. The sociopath is usually arrogant and egocentric. The Psalm says,

“He guides the humble to justice, and he teaches the humble his way.”

If a person is humble and has these values would he ever do anything like this wanton murder? How important to pay attention to every word of our liturgy and of our readings!

**9. The second reading from 1 Peter should trigger feelings or compassion and remorse.**

“Christ suffered for sins one, the righteous for the unrighteous that he might lead you to God.”

Noah’s salvation through the flood in the Ark prefigures baptism,

“Which saves you now. It is not the removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clean conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.”

This really makes it clear that none of us is in charge of our own lives but that God is the one who judges, who saves and who condemns. Very healthy perspective.

**10. Finally, the temptations of Jesus and his call to discipleship shows that we must be willing to struggle and sacrifice greatly in order to be able to follow him.** The formation of a Christian character with the right ideas, correct world perspective, personal virtues and disciplines is the result of a life-long struggle. It does not happen at once. But it must be done in order to be saved, to avoid Hell, and to be with God in heaven forever!

**11. In conclusion, what a great resource we have in our faith for good!** How important that we reach out to the wandering, the ignorant, and the lost, not only so they might be converted and saved, but for the sake of the safety of ourselves and the progress of our culture. I invite all of us to look forward to using this Lent to get our faith lives together, to better order our families, and to reach out to others with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

12. Questions for parents and children.

- a. How can we best take advantage of our spiritual practices during Lent to gain more control over our impulses, to become more disciplined and responsible, and to grow in understanding, compassion and pity for others?
- b. How can we provide the best loving, caring secure environment for our children and all members of our families?
- c. What do we think should be our next steps in growing in our faith?
- d. How can we as a church develop a better strategy for reaching out to the unchurched, to those who do not have or do not understand the importance of the faith?
- e. Can our participation in the offering, The Rice Bowl, of Catholic Relief Services, be a formation for us in our management of our material resources and a good participation in the world-wide mission of the Church?