

“A TALE OF TWO MARCHES” THE NEED FOR HEALING AT THE ROOTS

I have begun training for an unusual trip in March. I hesitate to call it a “bucket list” experience, because I loathe that phrase, but in some ways it fits the definition. I will be traveling to Nepal with my older brother to hike (they call it “trekking”) for two weeks, culminating in a visit to the Base Camp of **Mount Everest**. If successful, we’ll top out at **18,192 feet**, but trust me, I have absolutely no desire to climb the additional 10,843 feet to the summit (29,035 feet.) I only desire some great family memories and a nice photo of the two of us with Mount Everest in the background. My training has largely consisted in multiple trips running up and down the 187 steps leading from the James J. Hill House to United Hospital. I usually train alone and rarely see others. I invited my brother to join me on Saturday, but should have known better. We weren’t alone, not by a long shot, encountering scores of people on their way to the Women’s March, ascending the steps from downtown.

Many greeted us, one even playfully shouting “Show Off” as we ascended more rapidly, clearly in good fun. However, I also spotted t-shirts announcing “Not My President” and saw (presumably) a minister wearing a colorful stole bearing a message— “Pro-faith, Pro-family, Pro-Choice,” and tried, utterly in vain, to wrap my head around that logic. Local television coverage even featured a “20-something” who actually chuckled while displaying her sign: “Thou shall not mess with Women’s Reproductive Rights,” ‘citing’ the Book of Fallopians 4:28. Is nothing sacred, not even the Bible? Surely, it is not for me to cast aspersions on individuals, much less judge souls, as I am first and foremost a sinner in need of God’s mercy. And given the contentious 2016 presidential campaign, I’m hardly surprised at the division in its wake. But this weekend captured just how bitter is that division, both visually and viscerally.

After lunch, while putting the finishing touches on the Sunday petitions, a news network played in the background. I wasn’t really even listening, when I heard a vile four-letter word that made me cringe. “Did I just hear what I thought I heard,” I mused? Then a few seconds later, again. It turns out that Madonna was speaking, and there was no mistake. “Why is this airing live,” I thought? Before I could grab the remote to turn the channel, it happened a third time. To provide that kind of platform on national TV is shameful. The network apparently apologized later, but could have easily have pulled the plug much earlier. Do you think the **National Right to Life March** would be broadcast live? Madonna also shared, “I have thought an awful lot about blowing up the White House, but I know that this won’t change anything.” Hmmn...Principle 5 of the Women’s March states: “Avoid internal violence of the spirit as well as external physical violence. The nonviolent attitude permeates all aspects of the campaign.” Clearly, Madonna missed the memo! I was so profoundly saddened and utterly deflated by what I witnessed on the television. It was a sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach and in the depths of my heart.

And then Sunday followed. After celebrating three morning Masses, I attended the **Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Rally**, as I have done many times before. Among the **5,000 in attendance**, I saw families with kids in strollers, singles, seniors, college students, high school letter jackets, Roman collars and even women holding signs that read, “I regret my Abortion.” Imagine the courage and humility it took to hold such a sign in public! Young people, the true future of the pro-life movement, were enthusiastic in their response to the speakers. Though Sunday’s rally was outnumbered by a factor of 15 to 1 from the day before, it is not about the crowd size as much as it is about the message. But one thing is for certain— if we are convinced about the aims of the pro-life movement, we must speak out, act and yes, be seen! We cannot just sit back, because many others are organizing in a radically different direction.

For the first time in years, Minnesota’s House and Senate boast a pro-life majority, but in the world of politics, things can change quickly. Free speech is the hallmark of democracy, just as occurred both on Saturday and Sunday. Clearly people marched for various reasons on Saturday, including immigration and climate change. But it is clear that abortion held center stage, as the “Unity Principles” themselves indicated on the Women’s March website, advocating for “open access to safe, legal, affordable abortion and birth control for all people, regardless of income, location or education.” But the difference in tone between the march in Washington D.C. and Sunday’s MCCL march was as stark as I could possibly imagine. There is something much deeper at the root that can only be addressed by a radical conversion of hearts through God’s grace.

During my Sunday homily, I briefly spoke of how women suffer alone and often in silence, never even telling a soul of their painful experience of abortion. I close by calling attention to a wonderful retreat program for those seeking post-abortion healing. Called **Rachel's Vineyard**, the title comes from Scripture: "Thus says the Lord: In Ramah is heard the sound of sobbing, bitter weeping! Rachel mourns for her children, she refuses to be consoled for her children—they are no more" (Jeremiah 31:15). The Gospel of John (chap. 15) speaks of vineyards: "Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me." Rachel's Vineyard is a safe place to renew, rebuild and redeem hearts broken by abortion (see www.rachelsvineyard.org). May God heal broken hearts and heal our nation.

- Last Monday, President Trump signed an **executive order** first championed by Ronald Reagan ("Mexico City Policy") that requires non-governmental organizations receiving federal funding to agree to "neither perform nor actively promote abortion as a method of family planning in other nations."
- I was mildly rooting for the **Green Bay Packers** and **Pittsburgh Steelers** to reach the Super Bowl, but was wrong on both counts. Both cities have such loyal fans— they deserved it.
- For the first time since the cessation of hostilities, Vatican Officials visited Christians in **Aleppo, Syria** at the request of Pope Francis, showing forth his closeness for the well being of all living there.
- The new director of the Vatican Museums, **Barbara Jatta**, wasted little time, as she unveiled a new multimedia web site including 4,000 images of its artworks, 50 videos, and virtual tours of the museums. More than 5 million visited the museums last year. Check it out – www.museivaticani.va
- Words of wisdom from **St. Thérèse of Lisieux**: "For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy."
- As in previous years, we will move next Saturday evening's anticipatory Mass to **4:00 p.m.** This is mostly due to increased security for the Crashed Ice Event. See the complete notice in the sidebar.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector