

Homily Third Sunday Of Advent – 2006

Introduction:

Last Thursday I represented Pax Christi – USA at a hearing at the Department of Energy to voice our opposition to a new initiative of our government. Called “Complex 2030”, the United States proposes to put in place by that date a whole new generation of nuclear weapons – to renew completely our nations’ nuclear arsenal, at the cost of \$150 billion.

Naturally, faith-based groups like Pax Christi and many others oppose this monstrous idea and gathered to voice our opinion this past week. Perhaps the most dramatic testimony that day came from a person from the scientific community, an engineer, who stood at the podium with his prepared remarks in hand and completely lost it. He couldn’t say a word, but actually broke down in tears as he tried to express his horror at what our government intends with this “Complex 2030”. The best he could do was stammer out a few words like: “this is insanity”, “please don’t do this”. As I say, his witness was powerful – a person who could visualize better than most of us the enormity of the destruction which this initiative represents and so overwhelmed by it that he was virtually speechless.

I That experience crystallized for me something that I have been thinking about during these days of Advent. We Americans, and particularly we who are Catholic-Christians here in this country, face a stark choice today. In what do we place our security – in the gun, the weapons, nuclear arms; or in the life and teachings of a defenseless baby whose birth we celebrate once again in a few days?

The choice is real – we cannot have it both ways. Either we rely on force, violence, armaments, homeland security – or we rely on the One who came unarmed and remained that way all his life until he was crushed by the power He criticized and thereby became the Risen Savior of humankind.

Another way of saying this goes to the story we tell each other in these days – of an obscure place in the Middle East, Bethlehem, a young, unmarried mother, a newborn child, angels and shepherds. Is this just some cutesy tale we trot out each year at this time and then proceed to forget when the holidays are over. Or does this story guide our lives and our choices about security?

II The question come closer to home as well, doesn’t it. In our personal lives, in our families, among our friends and in our working world – where do we find security. In our efforts to remain healthy; in our stock portfolios; in our personal skills? Or is it with the One who said “whoever loses his or her life for my sake will find it”?

Conclusion: In the end it comes down to a proposition which I heard years ago and never forgot. It’s a question which we could well return to as these Advent days come to a close and Christmas arrives: are we Americans who just happen to be Christians; or are we Christians who happen to be Americans?