

Father O'Connor's Homily for 5 October 2025  
Twenty-Seventh Ordinary Sunday – C  
Respect Life Sunday  
Weekend Three: Stewardship Renewal Commitment Sunday

Habakkuk 1: 2-3; 2: 2-4  
2 Timothy 1: 6-8, 13-14  
Luke 17: 5-10

*This is our Annual Stewardship Renewal Commitment Weekend. Thank you for being a part of this great opportunity for our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parish Families to grow as disciples of Jesus, as we make our commitments in the areas of time, talent and treasure for the next twelve months.*

*I know that many of you have brought your commitment cards with you today, all filled-out. Thank you! You may place them in the collection basket along with your regular Sunday offering. Others of you have mailed in your commitment cards or submitted them online. Thank you!*

*Perhaps you forgot to fill-out a card or to bring it with you today. Would you kindly do so this week? In advance, I thank you too.*

*And there are commitment cards for both parishes in the pews. Because this is so important, you are welcome to fill one out right now as I share some thoughts on today's Scripture passages.*

*Thanks, everyone, as we make our plans for our stewardship journey together over the next twelve months.*

As members of God's family, the Church, we come to this church building today in order to worship God. And one of the areas of this church building, where I am standing right now, is called the sanctuary. "Sanctuary" comes from the Latin word **sanctus**, which means "holy." It is from this word that we also get the words "saint" and "sanctity."

This area is called the sanctuary – with the tabernacle, the pulpit, the altar, and the chair – because the holiest of things happen right here. From this ambo or pulpit in this sanctuary, this holy place, we hear God's Word addressed to us in the Scriptures. On this very altar very soon, bread and wine will be changed into the Body and Blood and the Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. On this altar the sacrifice of Calvary is made present for us during the Mass. We come to this sanctuary to receive Jesus Himself into our bodies in Holy Communion and to become a sanctuary for Him. And in the tabernacle, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is reserved for our adoration and for Holy Communion to be brought to the sick and the homebound.

And from this sanctuary we are sent on mission. At the end of Mass, having heard His Word and having received His Body and Blood, we are told: “Go!” To do what? To “announce the Gospel of the Lord.” In what manner? “In peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” Carry Jesus to the world where you live. Carry Jesus within the sanctuary of your life.

Sanctuary – a holy place where all of God’s children are welcome and safe.

In ages gone by, when a poor person was being chased by the soldiers of the king, that poor person could come to the church and seek sanctuary until they got a fair hearing.

In those shameful chapters of our American history when slavery was legal and prevalent, slaves escaping would take sanctuary in the church until it was safe for them to leave to pursue their freedom.

In our own times, refugees sometimes seek sanctuary in the church, lest they be sent back home to a persecution, or be separated from their families.

Of all of the sanctuaries, the most beautiful and natural one is a mother’s womb. There an unborn child, whose life began at conception, is safe and cared for and loved for nine months until being born. At least until January 22, 1973 – 52 years ago – when Roe v. Wade legalized abortion in the United States of America.

Since then, more than 63 million preborn children have lost their lives in our country. And so even today a mother’s womb is not always a safe place, a sanctuary, for an unborn child to be.

Does this move you to want to do more? I hope so.

In the second reading, Saint Paul wrote to Timothy: “Do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord. Bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God.”

We need the grace and the courage to stand up for the God-given sanctity of every human life, from the moment human life begins at conception, until God calls us home through natural death. For if we allow legal exceptions to this, then no human being is safe at any stage of their life.

Every child waiting to be born deserves a safe sanctuary in their mother’s womb.

As members of God’s family, the Church, we all have a part to play.

This is the link with stewardship as a way of life. All that I have is a gift from God: my life – that next breath that I am about to take – my time, my talents and my treasure. God wants me to receive these gifts from Him gratefully, to

develop them with an increase, to share a portion of them generously, so that each person gives as they have been blessed and each person receives as they need.

Stewardship is all about becoming even better disciples of Jesus. And because Jesus lives in us and we live in Him, we are a sanctuary for Him.

There is a hymn that is entitled very simply, “Sanctuary.” I will leave the text of its chorus with you today:

*Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.*

*With thanksgiving I'll be a living sanctuary for you.*

*A sanctuary for you.*

[by Randy Scruggs and John W. Thompson]