

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
January 31, 2010  
“The American Experience”

Let us consider today, my friends, some recent and current events that have made the news across America as our focus for today’s meditation.

Specifically, I’d like to refer to the Health Care Reform debates, and to the sudden and unexpected shift in the balance of power coming out of the State of Massachusetts.

The Scriptural connections for these considerations today come from Jeremiah in the 1st Reading where he quotes God as saying: “For it is I who have made you a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass, against the whole land: others will fight against you, but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you.”

Surely, every well-meaning nation in the history of the civilized world has in some way seen itself as an example of God’s fortified city.

In the 1980’s, and throughout his 2 terms in office, President Reagan continuously anchored his vision of America as that “wonderful city, shining brightly up on a hill,” for all other nations to see and to emulate.

Now that was not to be pretentious, for there have always been voices, both inside and outside of America, that have been quick to point out what they think are our faults, not the least of which has been the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, who was recently given platform to speak here in Erie.

Lord knows, the voices from the loyal opposition are always what keep any government humble.

But the vision of a city or nation fortified under God’s protection should always override the negative, because in negativity, there is no hope.

Again, the history of great countries has shown this to be true.

And while America is still relatively young in age, compared to European and other countries, lets look at our own odds of survival:

We made it through the Revolutionary War, and then the 2nd War for Independence in 1812, in which Port Erie played such a central part.

We survived the Civil War in the 1860’s.

There were the World Wars I and II.

The Korean and Vietnam Wars.

The Cuban Missile Crisis in the 1960's.

The Collapse of Communism, and the destruction of the Berlin Wall in the 1990's.

And the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.

Any one or combination of the above could have crumbled a young nation.

But that none has, is proof to the faith-filled citizen that yes, indeed, America is "a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass, against the whole land, and so far none other has prevailed over us, for the Lord is with us."

Now in the on-going growth and development of any country, realities of living are constantly changing.

That's so very obvious; otherwise we'd be dead.

And currently one big reality that needs changed is our health care policies.

As most health-care executives are saying: "the current system's model is broken!"

The proposals for change have been hotly debated in both houses of Congress, as we have been watching on the nightly news.

And not everybody is happy with the way it's turning out.

And so America did what America does in such cases: they took the political opportunity of a vacant congressional seat to elect an oppositional voice just to regain a balance of governmental power.

There were no shootings, no homicides, no assassinations, just a peaceful, but forceful, exchange of power-control.

Here again are some more Scriptural connections from today's readings.

Chiefly, they are about listening to the prophets of our own time, the people who are trained to be look-outs, to give the rest of us directions to what's good and to avoid what is wrong.

Jeremiah, author of the 1st Reading, wasn't always happy having to tell the people to shape up, or God's ship would be leaving port without them.

In today's Gospel, Jesus can't work miracles in His home town because all the people remember Him as just the carpenter's kid, and what did He know.

But these two perspectives point out all the more the need for there to be voices, credible and trained voices, to keep in front of us issues that could go morally right or morally wrong.

Most Churches here in America, and certainly our Catholic Church, have tried very hard to provide that prophetic voice as clearly and continuously as possible.

Thank you and God bless you.