

*Homily for November 20, 2019*

Today's readings are very timely with something that is happening in Alberta this week. At the heart of the first reading from 2 Maccabees is the theme of how the Greek government officials demanded of their Jewish subjects they violate their consciences by eating pork meat. This act was to be symbolic of these 7 brothers and their mother denying their Jewish Faith. What is remarkable is that they all refuse to give into the demand and are consequently punished with the most brutal torture that results in their martyrdom.

The importance of conscience was described by St. Thomas Aquinas this way: Conscience' says St Thomas 'is the practical judgement or dictate of reason, by which we judge what here and now is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil.'" Conscience must be obeyed: "He who acts against his conscience loses his soul."<sup>1</sup>

The brothers so clearly understood this as did their mother, who must have been so attentive to shaping her boy's consciences through their formative years. Listen again what she says is to be the governing principle of her sons' lives:

Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws."<sup>2</sup> Then to the youngest still alive, is enticed by Antiochus Epiphanies to disobey his conscience she appeals:

***<sup>29</sup> Do not fear this butcher, but prove worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in God's mercy I may get you back again with your brothers."***<sup>3</sup>

Listen now to the son's response:

***What are you waiting for? I will not obey the king's command, but I obey the command of the law that was given to our fathers through Moses<sup>4</sup>***

For people of faith this reading tells us obeying our conscience is essential to living obediently before God. You have perhaps heard of the Private Member's Bill being introduced by Dan Williams. Bill 207: CONSCIENCE RIGHTS (HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS) PROTECTION ACT is being introduced in Committee on Friday, November 22. The purposes of the Bill include five protections for health care professionals who because of conscience would not be

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<sup>1</sup> [http://voiceofthefamily.com/the-teaching-of-bl-john-henry-newman-on-conscience-and-obedience/#\\_ftn9](http://voiceofthefamily.com/the-teaching-of-bl-john-henry-newman-on-conscience-and-obedience/#_ftn9)

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible*. (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, 2 Mac 7:23). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible*. (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, 2 Mac 7:29). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible*. (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, 2 Mac 7:30). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

able to perform certain procedures related to sanctity of life issues. Three of the purposes are as follows:

- to ensure regulatory bodies respect the rights of health care providers under section 2(a) of the Charter, specifically in respect of a complaint made against a health care provider that is based on the health care provider's exercise of those rights,
- to protect health care providers who exercise their rights under section 2(a) of the Charter from employment discrimination,
- to ensure that religious health care organizations are able to support their employees who wish to exercise their rights under section 2 of the charter.

This is an important Bill because in Ontario last May a superior court ruling declared that doctors in the province must give referrals for medical services that clash with their religious beliefs, calling it a compromise that balances the rights of physicians and the interests of patients.<sup>5</sup>

Bill 207 wants to ensure that the same kind of ruling would not be exercised in Alberta. To that end can I invite you read Bill 207. You can find it here:

([https://www.assembly.ab.ca/ISYS/LADDAR\\_files/docs/bills/bill/legislature\\_30/session\\_1/2019\\_0521\\_bill-207.pdf](https://www.assembly.ab.ca/ISYS/LADDAR_files/docs/bills/bill/legislature_30/session_1/2019_0521_bill-207.pdf)).

As well, please write an email in support of the bill to the Chair (Mr. Mike Ellis) of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills. The email address is [PBMPB.Committee@assembly.ab.ca/](mailto:PBMPB.Committee@assembly.ab.ca)

Write an email in support of the bill to your MLA. And ask your friends and family in Alberta to do the same.

We have an opportunity to influence our Law Makers to insure that Alberta is a place those who take their religious teachings seriously can obey their consciences while serving those whose medical care they have a responsibility to exercise.

There will be a link on our Facebook page and Website later today to direct you along with a sample letter.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-appeal-court-doctors-referrals-objections-1.5136455>