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October 17, 2008

## Bishop Hermann: 'I thought you should know'

Judgment Day is on its way

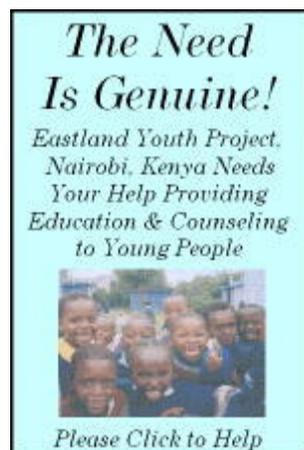
by Bishop Robert J. Hermann, Archdiocesan Administrator

Judgment Day is on its way. We cannot stop it. We don't know when it will come, but just as surely as the sun rises daily, the Son of Man will come when we least expect.

Judgment Day is on its way. For many, this coming election may very well be judgment day, for this election will measure us. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us in 10:32-33: "Everyone who acknowledges Me before others, I will acknowledge before My heavenly Father. But whoever denies Me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."

Judgment Day is on its way. When my time comes, I will be measured by my Savior for the decisions I have made. I will either be acknowledged by Jesus or denied by Him in the presence of our heavenly Father. The question I need to ask myself is this: What kind of witness will I give to Him when I go into the voting booth this election day?

The decision I make in the voting booth will reflect my value system. If I value the good of the economy and my current lifestyle more than I do the right to life itself, then I am in trouble. Pope John Paul II, in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici* tells us: "Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights — for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture — is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination."



The right of our children to be protected from destruction is greater than my right to a thriving economy. I am living proof of this, since I am here because my parents believed this priority and lived it. My desire for a good economy cannot justify my voting to remove all current restrictions on abortion. My desire to end the war in Iraq cannot justify my voting to remove all current restrictions on abortion.

My parents got married about one year before the stock market crash of 1929, and yet they raised 15 children in the midst of the Great Depression. They had no money. My mother made her own wedding gown and her own bouquet of flowers. I have my parents' wedding picture on the wall of my office, and I am reminded every day of the sacrifices they made for life.

We had no money, but we had each other! My parents were at home with us for three meals every day. We had plenty to eat because we raised almost all of our food. We seldom got new clothes, but we wore hand-me-downs, unless my mother would buy materials and make our clothes. We lived in poverty, but we learned the value of hard work. We had no running water or electricity. We had no TV, Internet or cell phone. Yet, we were very happy because we had life! We had each other! Today, all 15 children in my family of origin are most grateful for the sacrifices Mom and Dad made so that we could have life. Making sacrifices for each other brought us incredible joy and enhanced our dignity, because it gave us a chance to participate in serving each other!

In an article written by Pope John Paul I, printed in the current issue of *Magnificat*, the pope reflected on the life of Andrew Carnegie, who wrote: "I was born in poverty ... but I would not exchange the memories of my childhood with those of a millionaire's children. What do they know of family joys, of the sweet figure of a mother who combines the duties of nurse, washerwoman, cook, teacher, angel and saint?" Does life get any better than this, when gifts of creativity, generosity and faith are nurtured in the midst of poverty? This is the abundant life on this earth, because it is fueled by faith and sacrifice! Perhaps this is not so much poverty as it is faith-filled luxury.

Judgment Day for us is on its way. Those 47 million children our nation destroyed are still living. We have destroyed their bodies, but their souls are still alive. When our Lord comes again, they may very well be there to judge us. Even worse, Jesus tells us that whatever we do to the least of our brethren, we do to Him. We would truly shudder if we heard the words, "I was in your my mother's womb but you took my life!"

It is quite possible that we might see these children, but, depending upon the choices we have made, we may very well be separated from them by a great chasm which cannot be crossed, much as the rich man who ignored Lazarus, the poor man, during his lifetime here on earth but was separated from him after death. The rich man was in flames, but Lazarus was in the bosom of his heavenly Father.

The Catholic Church teaches, in its catechism, in the works of Pope John Paul II and in the writings of Pope Benedict XVI, that the issue of life is the most basic issue and must be given priority over the issue of the economy, the issue of war or any other issue. These same teachings inform us that when both candidates permit the right to abortion, but unequally so, we must chose to mitigate the evil by choosing the candidate who is less permissive of abortion.

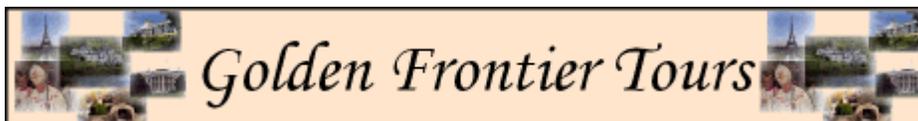
Judgment Day is on its way! I may deny it. I may pretend that it is still far away, I may deny that my actions are sinful, but that will not change God's judgment of me.

The deepest problem with many of our Catholics is that they have become so accustomed to rationalizing away a life of sinful actions so that they seem to be on cruise control, heading in the wrong direction. "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

My goal is not to engage you in some political party way but to engage you with our Savior and His teachings. We need to constantly challenge our accustomed behaviors in the light of the Gospel. We may say that we are following our conscience, but are we informing our consciences with the truth about these issues? Cardinal George Pell of Australia has said that we must follow truth and our conscience, but be steeped in truth so that our consciences be rightly formed.

Perhaps having to face these issues during this coming election can turn out to be a grace that truly awakens our need to learn more about the teachings of the Catholic Church, and then to use the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that we can receive His mercy and bring our behavior into conformity with the mind and heart of Christ. It is not too late to admit our sinfulness and turn to the Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we do this, both we and the heavens will be filled with joy!

Judgment Day is on its way. Pray your way into conformity with the teachings of Christ and His Church. Pray the family Rosary daily between now and Election Day so that you may not only make the right choice but also have the courage to discuss these issues with others who may have been misled by our materialistic culture. Include the candidates in your prayer intentions. It is my hope that our discussions will bring all of us to our knees to seek help from above.



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