

Homily given at the Mass for Religious Liberty

St. Anastasia Church, Newtown Square – November 5, 2012

By Fr. Chris Landis

We gather here on the Eve of the Election, to pray. To pray about something more important than simply who will be elected. We gather here to pray about the future of religion in the nation. We are here to pray that religious liberty will be maintained in America. Religious liberty is at the heart of the American experiment, at the heart of this country's founding. True, we have a separation of Church and State, and this nation was never an explicitly Christian Nation. It didn't need to be, because public life was informed by Christian thought, language and morality and most Americans were Christians who took their faith seriously. Church and state were separated but faith and politics were not. But, sadly, times have changed and so has this great nation. While 80% of American still proclaim to be Christian, faith is being relegated to being a private affair, banned from public sphere. No matter what happens in tomorrow's election, the future will be filled with difficulties. Religious liberty will continue to be attacked because a spirit of secularism is growing in our nation. The Christian spirit that once formed the backbone of this nation, that was once grounded into its laws is weakening. It is being replaced by a growing secular spirit, and the moral foundation of our nation is decaying. It is being corrupted by, and weakened by a moral relativism that claims morality is defined by us, not given to us by God.

George Washington himself warned against the possible decay of American morality. In his farewell address he told the nation he loved so much: "reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail

in exclusion of religious principle.” That is what is happening religious principles are being excluded from the public sphere and so national morality is fading.

There is a battle of ideals raging in this nation; not between liberal and conservative, not between Republicans or Democrats, but between secularism and Christianity. This nation will be defined by either a Christian spirit or a secular one. Its laws and society will be defined by one or the other. The Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said: “A religion that doesn't interfere with the secular order will soon discover that the secular order will not refrain from interfering with it.”

The secular voice tells Catholics that “our morality” should be kept to ourselves, and that we have no right to apply it to others. This is absurd! Our key moral principles, about the dignity of each human person, about the sanctity of marriage, about justice and peace - these are universal principles that apply to all, not just faithful Christians

Either Christian morality will be the foundation of this nation or secularism will be. Secularism will be forced upon us by government legislation. It has already begun to happen. The government is trying to force us to accept the secular redefinition of marriage, which denies the essential fact that marriage exists for the begetting and raising of children. The HHS contraception mandate is attempting to force the secular view of sexuality on our nation. And most distressingly, the secular view of the value of human life is being represented in our nation’s laws. A culture of death has been forced upon our great nation. The secular view that the unborn child is not a person, but a blob of cells has lead to the legalization of abortion, and the slaughter of millions of innocent children.

What is the answer? What are we to do? Our wonderful and courageous Archbishop tells us how we are to fight to defend religious freedom he says: “Politics and the courts are important. But our

religious freedom ultimately depends on the vividness of our own Christian faith—in other words, how deeply we believe it, and how honestly we live it.”

This is the answer. This is our Christian duty and our patriotic duty. We serve our nation best by refusing to be silenced by the voice of secularism; the voice leading our great nation astray. That voice tells us over and over that our faith is private matter. It is not! “Our faith is always personal, but never private”.\* It must be lived, proclaimed, and defended in public.

So, gathered here tonight on the eve of the next phase of our country’s history, we pray. We pray for our great nation. We pray that every Christian in it will be given the grace, the faith, and fortitude to stand up and fight the growing secular spirit by proudly and passionately proclaiming the truth of the Gospel.

AMEN! \*taken from a quote by Archbishop Charles Chaput