

The Storm is coming against our Religious Freedom!

Do you have a Weather Radio in your home or at your work?
It's a device that warns you of a **pending storm**.

Whether it's a severe storm or a tornado,
the Weather Radio warns you to get prepared because trouble is coming your way.

The popular Weatherman, James Spann, from ABC 33/40 has always promoted
owning one of these and after the deadly tornadoes went through our area in 2011,
I went out and got one at Walgreens for under \$20.

It does a **great job** of alerting me **when trouble** is coming my way.

Well, there's something else that's been acting like a Storm Alert system for years.

It's something we need to listen to **because** it's warning us of a pending storm.

It's not something you buy ... it's not even a device ...
rather it's a panel of 9 people who we refer to as the Supreme Court.

Beginning in 1973 and continuing over **the past 42 years,** the Supreme Court has made a **series of announcements** that
while they appear to many to be **judgements** for the rights of the people ...
are actually judgments that threaten the very foundation of
our **Declaration of Independence ...**
namely our Constitutional right to **Life, Liberty** and the **Pursuit of happiness**.

These are the "**inalienable rights**" which our **Declaration** says have been given to all **human beings** by their Creator, and for which **governments** are created to protect.

In 1973 the Supreme Court decided that **abortion** would no longer be a crime and would be allowed for any reason throughout **the entire 9 months of pregnancy**.

The basis of their decision was to give women the freedom of choice to do what they want with **their body**.

In doing this they took away the **inalienable right to life** of the baby growing inside **their mother's womb**.

And the result was that **People of God** who witnessed that they are **People of Life** have become labeled as "**anti-abortion protestors**".

So we ... the good guys ... have become the bad guys.

In mid-June, the Supreme Court decided that Affordable Care Act known as Obamacare, could indeed require all people to purchase health insurance and mandate that all insurance plans include coverage for abortion and contraception.

The basis for their decision is to give equal access to medical to all people regardless of their income.

In doing this, they took away our freedom to have medical insurance or not ... and to have a plan that did not cover practices that are in direct opposition to the faith of Catholics and many Christians.

**And so we, the People of God who do not comply with this mandate will be fined.
Once again ... we ... the good guys have become the bad guys.**

And most recently, in late June, the Supreme Court decided that gay people can be married ... a man marrying a man ... or a woman marrying a woman.

**The basis for their decision was equality ...
saying that all persons have the right to be married.**

In doing this they re-defined marriage as being something other than ... the sound and stable building block of society that it has been for thousands of years and have opened the door to further distortions of what marriage really is.

This week, a man in Billings, Montana, inspired by the Supreme Court decision has petitioned for permission to marry his 2nd wife and he made it clear that he will sue if his petition is denied. The reporter said that not too far down the road a decision will be made in his favor and we'll start to have group marriages.

**In January, the Houston woman, Jasmin Eleby, married herself in an elaborate wedding ceremony fulfilling a promise that if she didn't meet mister right by age 40 she would marry herself.
Her friend said, *"It took some of us to get to 40 to recognize we didn't need a man to be complete regardless of what was instilled in us."***

You think that's too much ... how about this?

A 20 yr-old Australian man married his dog ...

a 5 yr-old yellow Labrador Retriever.

Why not? After all ... a dog has always been "man's best friend."

**And so we, the People of God, who hold to the scriptural definition of Marriage as being the covenant union between one man and one woman ...
will be looked at as being intolerant of the gay lifestyle.**

Once again ... we... the good guys have become the bad guys.

Can you hear the alarm? You can hear it if you're listening!

So get ready ... the storm is coming.

And we ... the People of God ... are directly in its path.

What are we to do?

We're to follow the guidance of God that He gives us in our readings today!

**When God sent Ezekiel forth to be His prophet He warned him as we heard today,
*"Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you."***

If that was the case 2,500 years ago ... how much more so today!

Yes, so many more people are living without

the Word of God and the Love of God alive in their hearts ...

and they are indeed ... obstinate of heart.

Those are the people that surround us ...

Those are the people we are engaging day after day

People who don't know God

and don't want to be bothered with knowing and following His ways.

But God tells Ezekiel to go forward anyway ... to face the storm! He says,

*"Whether they heed or resist – for they are a rebellious house –
they shall know that a prophet has been among them."*

**500 years later, God sent His Son Jesus to announce the Good News to the people
and still He too encountered many who were hard of face and obstinate of heart.**

We hear in our Gospel of the cold reception Jesus received even in his own town.

Mark records "the People took offense at Him."

Well, here we are in the year 2015 and

the Voice that God is sending among His people ... is your voice and mine.

And as God warned Ezekiel ... he now warns us. We too will be facing ...

*"rebels who have rebelled against (God) ... and
ancestors who have revolted against (God)."*

Our Responsorial Psalm further describes our situation ...

*O Lord, ... our souls are more than sated with
the mockery of the arrogant,
with the contempt of the proud.*

How do we persist through all of this? With the **help and **power of God**!**

This was **the great insight** that **St. Paul** came to discover in his life.

In our Reading from **2nd Corinthians**,

Paul describes how he went to the Lord **three times in prayer** to get Him to remove a certain **“thorn in the flesh”** that he struggled with.

Instead of relief, **Jesus** simply told to him,

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.”

Once Paul discovered that he had access to the **unlimited power of God**, he writes,

*“I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses,
in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”*

He realizes, *“for when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

The way that we do what God asks us to do ...

is to readily admit of our **weaknesses** to God.

That’s when the **power of Christ** begins to flow in you and **through you** to others.

Realize that this is **the exact opposite** of **how society operates**.

Every day in the news, different **government departments** and **offices** say they are determined to try something different to solve the many problems we have with the **budget, the prisons, unemployment and schools and crime and drugs, etc.**

Many of them aren’t even going to Church let alone praying for God’s help.

And **in their arrogance**, they leave the power of God out of the equation

and they go along trying to solve all their problems without the help of God.

It hasn’t always been this way you know.

In the early years of our great nation, which began 239 years ago yesterday,
we were a humble, God-fearing people.

Being a **new nation**, we were **not so sure of ourselves ...**

and so we humbly and happily called on God for His every gift and blessing.

We even put **God’s name** on **our money**! No other country has ever done that!

We imprinted, **“In God we Trust”**,

Yes, our **Founding Fathers**, early Presidents, **Supreme Court Justices**,
Congressmen, Teachers, and Pastors all called on the almighty power of God.

But not so today.

Jesus' words to the Church in the **Book of Revelation** come to mind where He says,
"How far you have fallen."

Indeed, how far we have fallen ... in **just 239 years!**

Where have we fallen? ... away from God and into sin and **error**.

Where His name and His word were initially encouraged in the **classroom** and
in the **military** ... **today** they are banned.

Where people used to go to Church and tried to live in accord with **His laws**,
they now live in open opposition to **God's commands** about life and love.

People keep expecting things to get better. **But** they'll never get better **until** we
return to expressing a faith in the wisdom and power of **God**.

We saw this in our **Gospel** today.

When Jesus, the all-powerful Son of God, enters His **hometown** ...
He refrains from performing any miracles there. **Why?**

Because in their **pride** and **arrogance** ...
they refused to believe in Him and seek His help.

Mark records, "*So he was unable to perform any mighty deed there ...
He was amazed at their lack of faith."*

Everyone wants to see a miracle,
but no one wants to believe in the **Miracle Maker**, who is **God**.

God is the **Miracle Maker** ... **He** has the **power** to make all things new.
Jesus demonstrated this many times with **miraculous healings**, and
He demonstrated this when **He** rose from the tomb with a new glorified body.

How do we get **God's miraculous help**?

The **first step** is to believe in Him. (You have to believe in the unbelievable).

The **second step** is to admit weakness, humble yourself and beg for His help.

The **third step** is be **courageous** enough to go out and be a voice for God's ways.

I received a **video** two weeks ago as a gift entitled "*The Last Ounce of Courage*".

Produced in **2012** it portrays the very situation we are in today ...

where our **religious freedom** being attacked and threatened and removed!

Please take time to view this powerful DVD!

As we celebrate our **Nation's Independence**, let's pray for **the courage to reclaim** and hold onto our belief in God that got us off to such a **good and blessed start ...**
by recalling our **absolute dependence on God ...**
knowing that ... "*when we are weak, then we are strong.*"

Remember too, the words that **Abraham Lincoln** used in his prayer on that first Thanksgiving, words from Psalm 33, "*Blessed is the land whose God is the Lord.*"

And contemplate God's promise in **2nd Chronicles** where **He said**,
"*If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray
and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven,
and will forgive their sin and heal their land."*

I hope you're listening ... because the alarm has been sounded!

The storm is coming ... and we, the People of God ... are right in its path!

The Culture is losing patience with Catholic beliefs ...
and with our unwavering message of **Life and Love.**

So, we are gradually being labeled as being intolerant of disordered practices
and even labeled as being hateful toward the gay lifestyle.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Nothing has ever been published by the Church mentioning hate toward anyone.
And there's **no other organization in the world that does as much ...**
to offer care and support and love to those with a homosexual orientation.

But, because of our witness to God, we the good guys are becoming the bad guys
... and **if our practices are ever labeled as hateful, ...**

they will disappear as quickly as the confederate flag ...
with only **a perceived connection to one crime was quickly removed from state**
buildings with talk of **our 119 year old Linn Park monument** being taken down.

Rosaries hanging from your rearview mirror and crosses on your house or your car
will make you a target of persecution. That's what can happen ...
if we surrender the Freedom of Religion that is assured by our Constitution.

Don't listen to **the claim of separation of Church and state.** The **separation** that our
forefathers instituted was to protect us from the Government mandating we had to
follow **a national religion. Religious Freedom is more than Freedom of worship ...**
it permits us to live our religious beliefs outside the Church in the community.
The meaning is not freedom from religion ... it's freedom of religion!

Let's continue to be the voice of God ... which is the voice of **Life and Love ...**
for then and only then ... will God continue to bless America.