

AN ESSAY ON THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

By Deacon Jack Sullivan

January 22nd commemorates the date when the US Supreme Court, 40 years ago issued its decision in the case of Roe vs. Wade. And this Holy Hour for Life, celebrated today was instituted by the Deacons for Life in the Archdiocese of Boston to protest the intrinsic evil this decision represents. At this very moment, most parishes in the Archdiocese in the collaboration with all the dioceses in the US are celebrating this Holy Hour for life simultaneously with all those participating in the Walk for Life in Washington DC. It voices the Church's vehement condemnation of Roe v. Wade, and calls for a renewal of our Culture of Death, as Pope John Paul II called it. The Church overwhelmingly condemns the taking of all innocent life, not only of the unborn, but also of the elderly, who in the eyes of many secular progressives, cease to be productive and become a burden upon their families and a drain upon the economy.

The church calls upon us, today to embrace the culture of life as a counter measure. To this end, we come together to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, that all the ferocious attacks on human life may cease! We pray that we may not waiver in our efforts to protect all human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.

Today, attacks on life are both more serious and more numerous than ever before! We are witnessing an alarming spectacle of assaults on life such as abortion, which is a billion dollar industry, and infanticide or the killing of children born with serious handicaps, by denying them basic health care after birth. We are also witnessing assaults on life such as euthanasia, or the premature and systematic embryonic stem-cells which, by the way, have been medically proven to be totally ineffective as compared with adult stem-cells! Unfortunately, these alarming assaults on life are supported by a broad spectrum of modern public opinion, which seeks to justify violence against life, by merely changing the words from "abortion" to "Pro-choice!"

Since Roe V. Wade, over 53 million children's lives have been snuffed out! That's 1/6th of our total population! Well over three million children have been systematically murdered in the US last year alone. That's equal to the total population of the states of ME, NH, and VT. Can you imagine the violent outcry if the total population of all these states were suddenly terminated! In fact, this modern-day holocaust against the Jewish people in Nazi Germany, and we called it the "Great Holocaust!" So too,

this culture of death came to maturity in 1973, when the US Supreme Court, in the case of Roe v. Wade, struck down a Texas statute criminalizing abortion, declaring it to be unconstitutional. And yet, abortion had been a major crime in all our states since the founding of America, as well as in all civilized societies since the beginning of time! Underlying this decision was the presumption that all rights originate, not from Almighty God, but from the state, despite the Church's teaching that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of their Creator! Furthermore, our Declaration of Independence proclaimed that every person has "An inalienable right (from God alone) to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And if our rights originate from God, the state cannot deny them.

The Warren Court, as it was called, declined, however, to follow the tenants of our Constitution and our Judeo-Christian traditions, by applying instead, its own modernist ideology, its own politically motivated, secular agenda to justify its decision, requiring all states to do the same! Its flawed legal reasoning is as follows:

The Court said that a pregnant woman may now legally terminate her pregnancy at specific stages of its development, because the fetus is not a living human being, not a person until viable, or until birth. While in the womb it is merely a conglomeration of cells and tissue. Because it is attached to the mother, the unborn cannot be a living person. The Court went on to say that the fetus is merely an article of the mother's personal property, much like her appendix, which can be removed at will. The court thereupon concluded that as the fetus is not a person, but merely an article of personal property belonging exclusively to the mother, she has an absolute right to privacy, which cannot be interfered with by a criminal statute of any state. The Warren court's decision is flawed because it described the fetus as not being a person, a human being. And yet, even in Warren's home state of California, its criminal code condemns the intentional killing of a fetus as murder because it is legally recognized as a person. This fact was made obvious in the high profile case involving Scott Peterson some years ago. Mr. Peterson was charged and convicted of 1st degree murder, not only of his pregnant wife, but also a second count of 1st degree murder of her unborn child. To this day California, as is true of most states, still considers the unborn child to be a person requiring constitutional protection!

In order to more convincingly dismantle the horrible aspects of this culture of death, we must first consider the ideology underpinning it. Explore the attitudes that support such massive destruction of human life, by first investigating and uncovering the irrationality of their ideology, and then holding

these false secular attitudes up to public scrutiny, to the light of day. Then, I believe we may more effectively bring about its long awaited change, as follows:

The secular, progressive thinking which prompted this decision arises from an ideology formed from a distorted and warped notion of the meaning of the word “freedom.” While it has traditionally meant the God given capacity to do good and avoid evil, its meaning has been changed to encompass a more popular “anything goes” attitude. It now teaches that all people have an unrestrained and unbridled right to freedom of choice, no matter how irresponsibly they exercise it! Free choice, they say, shouldn’t be suppressed or in any way limited by the moral teachings of any organized religion, especially Christianity! Therefore, Christianity, especially the Catholic Church must be attacked and defeated, for this secular agenda to survive. But this modernist agenda goes further by saying there is no such thing as “objective truth,” or the moral teaching of “right or wrong,” or of “conscience” for that matter, although it has served as the basis for our faith for the last two thousand years. Nor is there any sense of moral or personal responsibility for one’s actions. Decisions are merely choices or options, to benefit one’s own self-interest, leading to one’s own self-exaltation, especially in this narcissistic culture! Any person can define and decide what is right or wrong, to suit or justify himself, and truth and any sense of reality may vary according to the individual! This ideology depicts “relativism” in its most basic and most dangerous form because it denies the notion of sin or wrong-doing! This secular movement seeks to replace the sovereignty of the created, over and above the sovereignty of the Creator, all but eliminating God and religion from the equation. Now, anyone with an ounce of common sense, can easily discern the effects that this pro-choice, liberal agenda has had on our society! As a result of this sinister and malignant philosophy, we have largely become an overly self-indulgent, sexually permissive, substance abusing, self willed, and violent people. A culture of death! It is clear, that as a result of our sexually permissive culture, many persons necessarily needed to be free to indulge in the pleasures of sexual activity while at the same time, escaping from the unwanted effects of their own immoral choices. They needed, in effect to run away from the grave responsibilities for their hedonistic actions. Hence, the need for more and more abortions! Doesn’t evil seem to beget evil? Shouldn’t “pro choice” really mean one’s choosing to abort the unwanted results of their own irresponsible behavior? Don’t we all assume grave responsibilities when we choose to beget human life?

Our Church, together with the law of nature has always upheld personal and moral responsibility for our choices! In the exercise of our own rights, we should not abridge or infringe upon

the rights of others including the unborn! In fact, the insistence of unfettered and uncontrolled freedom based on purely selfish motives, necessarily violates the rights of others especially when it results in the unabated killing of innocent life! And it constitutes a grave offense against the dignity of all human life! It is important to remember that in the entire spectrum of the animal kingdom, the mother's womb has always been the sacred temple of new life! And therein lies its greatest protection—until now! When you hear those considering abortion say, "it is my body and I have a right to choose to terminate my pregnancy," I suggest you might respond by saying, "But the baby is not your body, it's another body! Therefore, your right to choose ends, when someone else's rights to life begin!"

Again, the basic premise justifying the decision of Roe vs. Wade was that the unborn is not a person, but merely an article of personal property belonging exclusively to the mother. And yet since the Rose case, medical science has clearly shown that human life actually begins at conception.

Consider its findings:

1. At conception, a new human being is totally complete, but for growth. It has its own DNA, even the baby's sex is determined.
2. 18 days after conception, the baby's heart starts beating.
3. At 8 weeks, every part of the baby's body is fully formed.
4. At 11 weeks, the baby has fingerprints.
5. At 12 weeks, the baby's lips open and close. The baby can wrinkle its forehead, raise its eyes, turn its head, and smile or frown.
6. At 16 weeks, the baby reacts to sound, sucks its thumb, and swallows. It may get hiccups, yawns, and stretches.
7. At 20 weeks, the baby sleeps, wakes up, and is fully able to hear.
8. At 24 weeks, the baby can make a fist and punch it against its mother.
9. At 25 weeks, the baby can hear like an adult, and even discern the moods and attitudes of its mother. Therefore, "happy moms make happy babies!" And most importantly, the baby, from its earliest stages of development shows SYMPTOMS OF PAIN!

So is it any wonder that the development of a baby in the womb touches our hearts? The baby is a reflection of God! We are truly beautiful, because we reflect the grandeur of God's own beauty! I believe Psalm 139 says it best:

“Lord, you have probed me, You know me; you know when I sit and stand, You understand my thoughts from afar. My travels and my rest You mark; with all my ways You are familiar. Where can I hide from your Spirit? From your presence, where can I flee? If I ascend to the heavens, You are there; if I lie down with the dead, You are there too. If I fly with the wings of dawn and alight beyond the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand hold me fast. You formed my innermost being; You knit me in my mother's womb. I praise You, so wonderfully You made me; how wonderful are your works! My very self You knew. When I was being made in secret, fashioned as in the depths of the earth; Your eyes foresaw my actions. In your book all are written down, my days were shaped, before one came to be.”

Mother Theresa of Calcutta once said, “It is a very great poverty indeed, that a child must die, so that you can live as you wish!” In this culture of death the unborn, the elderly, the handicapped, or the burdensome pose a definite threat to our comfortable way of living.

It is worth repeating that since Roe vs. Wade, over 53 million children's lives have been snuffed out. Last year alone, over 41% of all pregnancies in the state of New York were terminated by abortion! The percentage of minority groups was even greater!

Who is guilty of these unspeakable crimes? Besides the mother, although she is often frightened, confused, and easily misled, moral responsibility may also rest with all those who directly or indirectly influence the mother to abort including parents, family members, and friends. Complicity also includes politicians who vote or help spread the value of abortion, and all those multi-billion dollar organizations who council abortion as the only alternative to unwanted pregnancies! Responsibility may extend to doctors, especially when they place at the service of death, skills which they acquire to promote and preserve life! I must however, hasten to add that God's mercy and forgiveness is always available to those who sincerely repent, for we are all sinners and have need of His mercy.

Never forget that amidst all the turmoil and violence we see in our daily lives, God has given all of us a sacred mission to be a people of life, especially with those who are the weakest and most vulnerable! We are all called to speak out – To be heralds of the Gospel of Life, so that our words may penetrate every part of our society, even when we are faced with open hostility and worldly rejection.

Remind them that God alone is the well-spring of creation, and how beautiful and grand this marvelous gift of life truly is! Only when we cultivate an attitude of religious “awe and wonder” at human life, can we honor the face of Christ in everyone we meet. And our efforts will surely lead us to re-new our society, and once more to be a people of truth, a people of love, a people of life, and a people concerned for the “least of these my brothers and sisters,” to the praise and glory of God, our Father.

Amen.