February 3rd, 2019: Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

January 22nd marked the forty-sixth anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Roe v Wade decision. As I contemplated the news that recently came out about a change in the abortion laws in New York state (making abortion legal through the ninth month), it caused me to think about the reality we face as Catholics on one of the most important issues in our nation and culture. So often we hear the argument that a person’s body is their own, and therefore they have the right to make their own decisions about what is best for them. And yet, as a society, we prohibit people from taking drugs that we know are dangerous and addictive; we recognize that there are limits to what is permissible.

The limits we place on people are part of the social contract that exists within every society. Such a contract is not necessarily written text, but rather, it is about how a society is able to maintain itself and ensure its ability to grow and develop. It is about determining what core values are best for the society. How can a society function and help its individuals to grow and flourish? The reality is that every society needs to discern what is the right balance between an individual’s rights and his/her freedom. We ultimately must recognize that freedom of expression and freedom of choice are inherent in the person because they have been granted by God. But, a society at the same time must be able to place some restrictions in order for the society to function. If there are no limits you have anarchy—too many, and you have a dictatorship. Determining the right balance is never simple or easy.

But, as Catholics, we must accept the truth that all life is sacred from the moment of conception. This is not about a human choice: rather, this belief is centered in the fact that all life comes about as a creative act of God and is endowed by God with dignity. Furthermore, we express the reality that God, in creating a human life, gives to each person particular gifts intended to further God’s plan for salvation. We believe, therefore, that our unique relationship with God begins at the moment God speaks our name. God has to make a specific choice for life to begin, and He does so with the intention of creating a particular and unique individual. Our creation by God is not simply a whim by God; rather, God has a specific purpose for what He is doing. He speaks us into being and creates a personal relationship with us. We simply need to look at the lives of Moses, David, Mary, John the Baptist, and so many others in the Bible to appreciate this truth.

Furthermore, this act of creation is an action of the Holy Trinity. It is the Father who speaks the Word, the Son who is the Word spoken, and the Holy Spirit who makes active that Word. As we read in Colossians, “For in [Christ] were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” All human life is connected to Christ and therefore is endowed with a sacred dignity that arises out of that connection.

Moreover, human life needs to be seen in the light of the incarnation. I believe that too often we do not contemplate enough the profound meaning of what the Church calls the hypostatic union, which is the fact that Jesus is fully and completely 100% human and fully and completely 100% God. In the one person of Jesus resides two completely different natures: one is the second person of the Trinity and the other is a human being. We believe that from the moment Christ was conceived—or as the Creed says, made incarnate by the Holy Spirit—this union of his two natures was formed. This wondrously profound act by God of uniting himself to us in the person of Christ speaks to how God views human life. The inherent dignity and sacredness of human life from the moment of conception was made apparent at the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel announced that the Holy Spirit would overshadow the Blessed Mother and she would conceive the Son of the Most High.

The destruction of human life, without grave cause, from the moment of conception until natural death is a rejection of the sacred dignity God has endowed it with, both by His particular creative act and the incarnation. Hence, to do so is one of the gravest acts in which a person can engage. For, to participate in or to abide the idea that human life can simply be destroyed by human choice, is to say the human will is of
greater value than the divine will. It is also a rejection of the inherent meaning of the incarnation, and therefore, a form of rejecting Christ himself. As Catholics we must do all we can to ensure that nothing abridges the sacred dignity of all persons. This teaching is not simply about abortion, but rather, it calls on us to make use of our gifts and talents to uphold the dignity of each person, and to work to ensure that all people can live a life that allows them to enjoy God’s gifts to humanity.

If we allow the destruction of human life at its most innocent and vulnerable moment, what does that say about our societal contract? What does it say about our morals and values? What does it ultimately say about the value we place on all human life?

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian