

Mass in Thanksgiving for the Gift of Human Life

Certain events in our lives make such a strong impact on us that we will always remember where we were when they occurred. Example:

- Those of us who are old enough will always remember where we were and what we were doing when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated;
- All of us can remember the where and what when 9-11 occurred;

Well, there are two other dates that I can remember vividly:

- I can clearly remember being in the living room of my parents on July 26, 1968, when the 5:30 evening news was broadcast. The Pope, Paul VI had just issued *Humanae Vitae*...the Encyclical on *Birth Control*. I remember it so well because of the female anchor on the network compared it to Soviet Communism and domination of the human person! I was so upset that the network would allow such a harsh comparison to be made.

I also remember a moral theologian commenting thus:

“The broad use of artificial birth control will so cheapen the beauty of Human Sexuality that the only logical conclusion is that human life itself will be considered no more than another commodity...to be accepted or rejected, to be kept or discarded as trash!”

How prophetic that statement proved to be!

- I also remember quite vividly January 22, 1973, when the Supreme Court legalized abortion in the case of Roe vs. Wade. I was in Rome in our national seminary. I had just finished classes for the day and had returned to the seminary for lunch. As I walked into the refectory the atmosphere was very dire and gloomy. I heard the announcement of the Supreme Court's decision legalizing abortion. No one spoke during the meal. It was truly a sad day for life and a terribly sad day since the corner stone Catholic Social Teaching, the Common Good of all of society, was set aside for individualistic interests!

The Church has always been concerned with being Pro-Life. In most dioceses in this country the Catholic Church is the largest provider of social services. This is often done through Catholic Charities and includes providing assistance to whoever needs it, regardless of religion, race, gender, nationality or sexual orientation. The services include housing, food, job training, immigration assistance, legal aid, dental care, mental health care, lifespan services for those with disabilities and their families and prenatal care and assistance for vulnerable pregnant women and unwed mothers.

Our teachings and moral life have their origin in Christ himself. We are often misunderstood and are called "*old fashioned*" or "*out of touch*". However the Church is committed to loving all peoples, disseminating the Truth as revealed by Christ, THE Word of God. Demands are constantly made that it change its 2,000-year-old teachings on marriage, family, sexuality, morality and other matters related to the truth about human beings.

What some Catholics and many non-Catholics do not seem to understand is that these teachings are timeless, they cannot be changed. Fads come and go, but the Truth that is Christ will always remain constant!

We, as the Body of Christ, the Church teach that it is our obligation to manifest love of neighbor, to provide charitable service to others, and to promote truth, genuine freedom and an authentic humanism. We work for the poor, the oppressed and the suffering, because that is what our Faith teaches we must do. In short, we always work for the good of each and every individual human being...what we call, The Common Good.

Prior to Roe vs. Wade, its Pro-Life stance was manifested mostly in taking care of the poor, widows, orphans, the sick and shut-ins, migrants and the

homeless. Abortion was not an issue since the tenor of the people was still opposed to the taking of human life in the womb.

It is very interesting to me to note that in the early days after Roe vs. Wade, the debate centered on “*personhood*”. The question was, “*Is the child in the womb a human person or not?*”

Through the years that concern was degenerated into this: “*Is the child wanted or not?*” The child in the Womb became a “commodity!” It can be created in a “test tube”! It can be “bought” through a surrogate mother, or “sold”! It can be sustained if it is the correct “sex” or has the right “characteristics” that the parents are wanting!

Again, how prophetic were the words of the moral theologian describing the concern that “*artificial contraception will transform the sacred act of human love into a “recreational sport”.*”

The mind of God is so clear in regard to the “dignity” of human life in the womb and after birth. From his revealed Word we have many examples.

The Prophet Isaiah writes:

*“The Lord called me from birth,
from my mother’s womb he gave me my name.”* (Is. 49:1b)

Psalm 139 is even more clear and precise.

*“You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother’s womb.”* (Ps. 139:13)

Christ’s own words in the Gospels reveal his thoughts in regard to little children:

*“Taking a child he placed it in their midst,
and putting his arms around it he said to them,
‘Whoever receives one child such as this in my name,
receives me; and whoever receives me,
receives not me but the one who sent me’.”* (Mk 9:36-37)

These comments were Christ's response to the question posed to him by his disciples. They were discussing *"who was the Greatest" among themselves.*" (Mk 9:34b)

We know that there are many places in Scripture that speak of the beauty of the human person and even the person in the womb. But we can know even without Scripture, that there is objective good and objective evil. Some things are always objectively good like Charity and Love. Then there are those things that are always objectively evil like envy, hatred and killing human life.

Perhaps the greatest sin of this modern culture is that it is *"self-centered!"* Christian Love must follow the example of Christ and his Great Commandment. *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."* (Lk 10 27)

To me abortion is the greatest sin because of two things:

- First, it makes the individual the center of the universe. The individual who commits or agrees to an abortion is very narcissistic! He or she looks to the self to make moral decisions. He or she only considers the needs of self; hence the baby plays no role in the decision. The baby becomes a commodity. Hence the baby can be kept or discarded at the whim of the so called *New Law-Giver*, the self. Christ plays no role in the decision! Christ is not the center of this person's universe!

St. Paul recognized this evil when he wrote in Romans.

"Ever since the creation of the world, his (God's) invisible attributes of eternal Power and Divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse. For although they knew God they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, {They} exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image of Mortal Man." (Rom 1:20-21a, 23)

- Second, the baby in the womb, THE place of sanctuary, tranquility, peace and safety, is killed because of narcissism and the lie perpetrated by our culture to let a mother believe abortion is moral! Hence, the Womb becomes the antithesis of its design; the place of sanctuary becomes the Tomb!

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have been so supportive of all the Pro-Life Activities of the Diocese of Amarillo. Your Prayers, your presence in front of Planned Parenthood facilities praying the rosary, your public witness in other arenas and your willingness to speak out publically have truly made a difference. Your courage and perseverance is admirable! Thank you!

I also want to continue to challenge you to continued Perseverance. We have made great strides in these past 40 years. Most people in the United States today identify themselves as Pro-Life! That is an accomplishment in itself. Thank you.

The headline on the January 14, 2013, issue of Time magazine read like this:

**40 YEARS AGO, ABORTION-RIGHTS ACTIVISTS WON
AN EPIC VICTORY WITH ROE V. WADE
THEY'VE BEEN LOSING EVER SINCE**

I believe that this is the case because of a couple of a few things:

1. In the face of the objective evil of abortion, we have continued to witness to the beauty and Objective Good of every child conceived in the womb;
2. In witnessing to the Gospel of Life we truly have been living out our Baptismal Vocation of bringing the Light of Christ to the darkneses of our world...in this case, to the darkness of killing the human life in the womb;
3. The Gospel of the Baptism of the Lord had God the Father reveal the identity of Christ: *“This is my Beloved Son, listen to Him.”* (Lk 3:22) Today’s Gospel has Jesus himself revealed his divine nature and personhood at the Wedding in Cana when he turned water into wine. *“In the day of the Lord, the mountains will flow {shimmer} with wine.”*

(Joel 4:18) Jesus is saying, *“I am the Messiah!”*

We have Witnessed by obeying that Great Commandment that He gave us; *“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”* (Lk 10 27) *“Love one another as I have loved you.”* (Jn 13:34) Should we not witness to the Truth that God has given us! It is through love that Christ has conquered the evil of sin and death and it will be through love that we will be victorious over the evil of abortion. We cannot fear, nor should we fear, nor will fear accomplish anything positive. Nor can anger or hatred do any good!

Our witness must always be expressed by loving others, even and perhaps especially, those who do not believe as we believe...in the sanctity and dignity of all Human Life!

The question is not, WHAT is man? Rather, the question is, WHO is man?

The answer is simply: Man is the creature God has chosen to love passionately...even to the point of sending His only begotten Son, who in turn, gave His life so that man, woman, *“may have life, and have it abundantly.”* (Jn. 10:10)

Together, let us look forward to another Memorable Day...yet to come! The day in which we will all remember where we were and what we were doing...the day Roe vs. Wade is overthrown!

✠ Most Reverend Patrick J. Zurek, Bishop of Amarillo, Mass in Thanksgiving for the Gift of Human Life and the in Atonement for the Evil of Abortion, 40th Anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, St. Mary’s Cathedral, Amarillo, Texas, January 26, 2013