

Pro-Life — 2009

These past few months there has been a lot of news on TV surrounding a woman in Florida, Casey Anthony, who is accused of murdering her own little daughter Caylee. She is expected to come to trial soon. If convicted we can only wonder — how is it possible for a mother to kill her own child? To kill any child of any age is just so evil... but for a child to be killed by her own mother. We have no words to describe such a heinous and unspeakably evil act.

And yet our society tolerates the killing of a million children every year, while still in their mothers' wombs through the act of abortion. Not only tolerates, but defends a mother's right to kill her unborn child as a constitutional right. Oh no, Father, don't tell me you're going on about abortion again. Didn't we hear that from you just a couple of months back? Yes, you did, and yes I am going to speak about it today, as I am obliged to do.

Actually though, I believe that for the most part I am speaking to the choir. I believe that the vast majority of you here today, if not all, are as convinced as I am, and as accepting of the Church's teaching as I am, of the evil of abortion. Nonetheless, we need to remind ourselves of why abortion is wrong. And if by chance there is anyone here who disagrees, I hope at least you will listen and allow yourself to be better informed, and, please God, be willing to open your heart to accept the grace of conversion.

The reason I am speaking to you today about abortion is first of all because on January 22nd, just two days after the Presidential inauguration, our country passed the 40th anniversary of the notorious Roe-v-Wade decision of the United States Supreme Court that ruled that it is a woman's constitutional right to have an abortion.

The second reason I am talking about it is because during the course of this year a Bill is going to be introduced in Congress, known as **FOCA** — the "Freedom of Choice Act," which is aimed at eliminating every last vestige of restrictions to abortions that still exist. Please read the insert in today's bulletin for full information. You will be shocked at how far-reaching it is.

Our bishops have organized a nation-wide campaign of letter writing to every member of Congress of the United States — every Senator and every House Representative, urging them to vote against the Bill. We'll speak more about that later as to how we can participate.

But we need to be better informed ourselves as to why abortion is such a terrible crime against humanity, so that we can better answer those who favor abortion, and be willing and ready ourselves to do everything possible to bring it to an end.

When the Supreme court ruled in 1973 that it is a woman's constitutional right to have an abortion, it drove a dagger into the very soul of America, and the killings began immediately, but in relatively small numbers — a few hundred during the first month. But that figure rose very rapidly, and has never stopped growing. By 1995 4200 abortions were reported being performed every single day in the USA. The number estimated today is about 3800 —

slightly less because of some restrictions placed on abortion, e.g. President Bush outlawed partial-birth abortion. But do the math — 3800 abortions a day adds up to more than a million and a quarter abortions a year.

The most conservative estimate of the number of children killed in their mothers' wombs in this country since 1973, is between 40 and 45 million.

What is really at stake in the whole abortion issue here in the USA? Some of what I about to say, you have indeed heard from me before. Well, that's OK. It's something that needs to be said over and over again, not just by me, but by all of us, because it is the truth that comes to us from the gospel. And that Truth, as with every truth from the gospel, is something that we must give witness to not just once, but throughout our lives.

Those who favor abortion, defend it mostly on the basis that it is a woman's "Right To Choose." That is why they call it "Pro-Choice." They argue that it is woman's right to do with her own body whatever she pleases, and whatever she chooses. They argue that it is her constitutional "Right" and that the State has no authority to restrict what a woman does with her body.

There are several points that need to be noted here.

1. All human rights are given to us not by the State, but by God. There was a time, some 150 years ago, when it was the constitutional right of an American citizen to own a slave. It was also assumed that you could do to your slave whatever you liked. But in time, the government came to realize that though it was legal, it was immoral. It was plain wrong! It came to realize that no person has the right to own another human being, or to treat another human being as though he or she were less than a human being — because God never gave such rights to any person.

As we know from our history, a terrible controversy arose over this and was the principal cause which led to the civil war. The so-called right — to own a slave — was finally taken away, because the State realized that no one ever had it in the first place.

2. In time the State also came to realize that some things people were doing to themselves, to their own bodies, was also wrong, because such things harmed them. Hence the drug laws of our country. It is nonsense therefore to say the State may not restrict what we do with our bodies. That is exactly what the drug laws are aimed at. The State does not recognize the right of any woman or man to choose to take drugs, or even to purchase tobacco or alcohol, if they are under the age of 21 years.
3. This however, is the terrible contradiction that the Supreme Court introduced into our country when it ruled on the Roe-v-Wade issue 40 years ago. The State does not recognize a right to "choose" to take certain drugs, because they are harmful to the human body, and the State punishes persons who knowingly and deliberately take prohibited drugs. And the penalty is much worse when we cause another to take drugs,

because to harm another person's body is even worse than harming our own. Yet, in the Roe-v-Wade ruling, the Supreme Court declared that the State must recognize a woman's right to destroy and kill the body of her unborn child.

4. The term "Pro-Choice" is a euphemism of course, and a misnomer. It is a pretty name for a very ugly thing. It is also a ploy, an attempt to distract from the real issue. Abortion is **NOT** about what a woman may do with her **own** body. That's what the pro-abortionists would have us believe.

Abortion is about what a woman, or others, do to her **child's** body. That's an entirely different thing. Over her child's body a woman has no rights at all, except to nourish it and cherish it. For that little body is someone else's body. It belongs to another human being, to another person. That child is an individual, a unique person, created in the image and likeness of God — a child with a soul.

The pro-abortionist will ask, "How do you know that? How can you prove the unborn child has a soul, or that it is even human? Did God tell you that?"

The Church responds: "The onus is not on us to prove that the child is human. It is you who wish to destroy it. The onus is therefore on you to prove that it is not.. How can you prove that the unborn child does not have a soul, that it is not human? You cannot, and in case of any doubt, (not that there is any), the benefit of that doubt must be given to the child.

What, after all, is it that a woman carries in her womb. That it is LIFE no one denies, not even the pro-abortionist, or the doctor or the scientist. But what **kind** of life is it? It is not a puppy, nor a cat, nor a chicken. It is **human**. The only kind of life that at a human mother can conceive and bear is human life. And the only human body that does not have a soul is a dead body. But the body of the unborn child is pulsing with life. At only 21 days after conception the child already has a beating heart.

5. But what does God have to say about all this? What do we read in the Scriptures? We read in Jeremiah that God called out to him while he was still in his mother's womb:

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

In Isaiah We read: *"It is I, the Lord, who made you, and fashioned you in the womb."*

And again: *"The Lord says, 'I formed you in the womb to be my servant.'"*

And again, in Isaiah God says: *"Can a woman forget the child in her womb? Yet even if she could forget, I the Lord will never forget you."*

What do these passages say? That the child in the womb is a child of God, created by God in his very image, a living human being with a soul, loved and cherished by God.

And consider Mary's visit to Elizabeth — the child, John the Baptist, leaps for joy in his mother's womb. One unborn child reacting to another unborn child. And Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, then proclaims to Mary: "*How is it that I am so honored as be visited by the MOTHER OF MY LORD?*" Only a week or ten days after she conceives, Mary is already a Mother. A woman can only be a mother to a person, to a human being.

Yet despite the fact that the child is human, those who favor abortion still argue that it should be a mother's right to exercise her "choice" whether to carry the child or to kill it. The word choice implies the exercise of freedom. To be free does not give anyone the right to kill the innocent.

Besides, if we are going to talk about freedom and choice, what about the child's choice: will we recognize the child's right to decide whether it wants to live or die? But an unborn child cannot decide anything for itself, they will argue. True! And neither can a child of one day old, or even a year old, decide anything for itself. Parents make all the important decisions for a child as it grows up, but always with the understanding that they are acting in the best interests of the child, with a view to protecting it and helping it grow and develop toward adulthood in the best manner possible. Never are parents' decisions intended to be directed towards harming or destroying their child. When it is, we call it *child abuse* which the State, quite rightly, punishes severely. There is no logic and no morality that can ever justify the direct killing of an unborn child.

Jesus taught us to love one another, even our enemies. Our Choice regarding any and all human life, born or unborn, young or old, healthy or sick, can only be one thing, to *accept and live at peace* with all God's children, to *embrace* them, *support* them, *nourish* them, *love* them.

What precisely is this "choice" that a mother or the parents make when they decide to have an abortion? What they are saying to their child is simply this:

I do not want you.
I will not accept you.
I will not make room for you in my life.
I will not live at peace with you...
And so, I will kill you!

Can this be what Jesus wants? No matter what the circumstances surrounding the mother or the parents may be, no matter how impossibly difficult the situation may appear, are we not as Christians called upon by God to respond *in faith and love* to *ALL* situations in life? Can the killing of the unborn child ever be a Christian response? Can it ever be a response in faith and love to our calling by Jesus Christ?

We need to give witness to our concern about the slaying of unborn life. Someone has said, with great wisdom, that for evil to prevail it is only necessary that good people do nothing. Silence gives consent. We must witness publicly. We must speak out and support

legitimate and genuine Pro-LIFE movements. We must be prepared to stand up and be counted.

At the same time we need to reach out in compassion and love to those who are contemplating an abortion. We need to let them know, and help them understand, that there are good alternatives to abortion. And to those who have aborted a child in the past, frequently they live with a devastating sense of guilt and loss — which they never get over. We need to help them come to realize that there is no sin, however great, that God cannot or will not forgive if we turn to him with real sorrow and repentance. Jesus died for all sinners, so that they may be loosed from their sins and find Life in him.

Finally, we all need to heed these words spoken by God in the Scriptures concerning children:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” [Jer 1:5]

“Thus says the LORD who made you, your help, who formed you from the womb.” [Is 44:2]

“Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.” [Is 49:15]

“It is I, the Lord, who made you, and fashioned you in the womb.”

“You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb.” [Psalm 139:13]

“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” [Jer 31:3]

“Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” [Mat 19:14]

“Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” [Mat 18:3]