



## ***Mass for Life***

**The Most Reverend Paul J. Swain**

**Bishop of Sioux Falls**

**Cathedral of St. Joseph**

**January 22, 2015**

***Offered on the 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the United States Supreme Court Decision Roe v. Wade***

Once again we gather to pray with the entire Church in the United States for penance for the violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life.

We do so because today is an anniversary. Usually we celebrate anniversaries looking back with grateful hearts recognizing a significant moment that changed lives for the good. However on this anniversary we look back with heavy hearts recognizing a significant moment that has taken lives. Today we acknowledge that day of infamy 42 years ago when the United States Supreme Court declared the unborn as nonpersons and authorized the taking of their lives essentially at will. Since then nearly 60 million little ones created by God with special gifts were not allowed to develop them and share them. For that we do penance.

“The Lord . . . from my mother’s womb . . . gave me my name<sup>1</sup>,” the prophet Isaiah declares. “Do not despise one of these little ones<sup>2</sup>,” Jesus declared in the Gospel.

The Lord is the giver of each life and goal of each of us, oneness with him in eternal life. This truth is written in our hearts, all life is sacred.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly sets forth what Christ teaches and what are called to live as his disciples: “Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life<sup>3</sup>”. We pray for the innocent ones.

The tragedy of abortion affects others as well. Many expectant mothers, so many without resources, too often unnoticed or uncared about, often under pressure from others, anguish and struggle. For those times we as a society, as Church and personally have not done what we could to reassure and to the extent possible alleviate such pressures, we do penance.

Let me restate as strongly as I can what has been true of our diocese for many years: no one should feel that abortion is the answer because they cannot afford the health care necessary to bring a child to birth or because they feel isolated and alone. Come to the diocese and we will walk with you. No one hurting from the aftermath of abortion need be isolated or alone either. Come to the diocese and we will help you find healing. One way each of us can do penance in a practical way is by supporting the Mother Teresa Endowment Fund which offers financial help for pregnant women, and Catholic Family Services which offers counseling, adoption services and programs that assist in post-abortion healing.

After all these years of the so-called ‘right’ to abortion is our society healthier? Happier? More loving? More at peace? Most would agree that it is the reverse and in fact we worry about the future for those privileged enough to be born. It is reflected in the acceptance of violence as a means to deal with problems. It is reflected in the breakdown of families and the multi-billion dollar pornography industry. It is reflected in human trafficking and abuse. It is reflected in what Pope Francis calls the ‘throwaway’ culture.

During these years so many, including many here today, have courageously worked and prayed for the restoration of the moral vision for our society which respects the dignity and sacredness of all human life and that this be reflected in our laws. Thank you. They might wonder though if trying to change laws and hearts is worth it; can it happen?

For eight years now, once a month I join with others outside the Planned Parenthood location here in Sioux Falls. We pray the Rosary and the Litany for Life. In that time at least 6,500 little South Dakotans were not permitted to join us. It breaks my heart. Yet prayer is powerful; moral right must be defended. We must never give up; we must never give in, we must never accept that these little one are not beating hearts deserving to be loved and ready to love back.

There is a poem I have quoted before that catches for me the real choice before us all:

To every man there opens(eth),  
A Way, and Ways and a Way.  
And the High Soul climbs the High Way  
and the Low Soul gropes the low  
and in between, on the misty flats  
the rest drift to and fro.  
But to every man there opens(eth)  
the high and the low,  
and every man decides(th)  
the Way that his soul shall go.<sup>4</sup>

We must and we will continue to do penance because we are sinners. We must and we will continue to pray because we are believers who care about others especially those who drift to and fro. We must and will continue to strive to restore the culture of life to our country. We will do so because we choose that our souls climb the High Way. We will do so because our faith, our trust, our hope is in Jesus Christ who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Blessed Mother Mary. By the Father’s plan He was allowed to be born into the world for a purpose beginning as a little one to be loved and as a savior to be worshipped. In Him is our hope. May we as a nation rediscover the high way to his love.

May Mary, the mother of Life and Star of hope, be with you all.

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1 – Isaiah, 41  
2 – Matthew 18  
3 – CCC 2270  
3 – The Way, John Oxenham