



Mass for Life

The Most Reverend Paul J. Swain

Bishop of Sioux Falls

Cathedral of St. Joseph

January 22, 2018

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

Today we come together to pray on the 45th anniversary of the decision by the United States Supreme Court to sanction abortion basically at any time and for basically any reason¹. It is a flawed sense of freedom. Saint John Paul II taught us that true freedom is not the right to do whatever we want according to our whim or convenience but the right to do what we ought to do according to God's law². God's law is respect for all human life from conception through natural death. God's law is that he is the determiner of life and its length. God's law is above that of nine justices of the US Supreme Court.

Sadly it is estimated that since this tragic court decision over 60 million little ones have been denied their right to life, their opportunity to share their gifts with us, their dignity to become who God created them to be³.

The bishops of the United States have designated this as a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. The collect or opening prayer states it well⁴:

“God our Creator, we give thanks to you, who alone have the power to impart the breathe of life, as you form each of us in our mother's womb; grant we pray, that we, whom you have made stewards of creation, may remain faithful to this sacred trust and constant in safeguarding the dignity of every human life.”

At the March for Life rally in Washington last week Cardinal Timothy Dolan noted “our belief in the dignity of the human person and sacredness of human life propels us to concern for human life wherever, whenever, and however it is threatened, from racism to immigrants, from the war torn to the hungry.”⁵

Then he asked this probing question: “(w)hy are we here at this ‘March for Life’?” He said, “(a)s noble as our cause is, we are ridiculed, dismissed, harassed, and even persecuted, snickered at (by many in) the media, considered unwashed by most of academia and Hollywood, and ignored and criticized” (by many politicians).⁵

He said we must not become discouraged. “We are here to advocate, to be encouraged, to lobby, but we are also here not as warriors, but as apostles of life, apostles armed not with money, hate, or destructive words . . . but with love and joy.”⁵

That apostleship of life includes reaching out to those who are considering abortion and walking with them in their time of need and to accompany those who have had abortions confident in God's mercy and new life in Christ.

The key as in most things is prayer, especially prayer to the Blessed Mother that she might intervene for us as we continue to seek the right to life of all innocent little ones. We just celebrated Christmas, the birth of the baby Jesus. The United States Supreme Court tells us that Jesus conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit was not a life at all. It just does not make sense, and so we must not accept this misguided legal decision.

Cardinal Dolan concluded with this pledge which I fully endorse that "we will not give-up. . . that reason and the grand American tradition enshrined in our foundational documents are on our side, and that our love for babies, their struggling moms and dads, and our passion for a society to assist and protect all vulnerable life will keep us at it," quoting Dr. Martin Luther King: "We shall overcome."⁵

Our closing prayer summarizes why we are here for: "Increase your love within us, Lord God, by the saving mysteries we have celebrated, and bring people everywhere to respect your gift of human life. Through Christ our Lord."⁶ Amen.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

1 – *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973)

2 – Pope St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995

3 – Abortion Statistics: United States Data and Trends, National Right to Life, 2015

4 – Collect, Roman Missal, Mass for Life

5 – Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, Prayers for Life Before March, Mass of the Vigil for Life, Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, January 19, 2018

6 – Closing Prayer, Roman Missal, Mass for Life