

+ HOMILY for March for Life Mass +
24 January 2005
Fr. Bob Robeson

In the Gospel today, the scribes have fallen into the very same trap that our culture has fallen into with regard to the value of human life. You see, the scribes take something good, something holy, and turn it into something evil. They see the good work that Jesus is doing – his healing and his preaching – and they attribute his work to Satan. Because of their own distorted thinking, their own sinfulness and selfishness, they convince themselves that something good is actually evil.

It is the same trap that our own culture falls into when we take something good – something very holy – like the human being inside the womb of her mother and call her an inconvenience, an unwanted pregnancy, an object of choice.

Not long ago I read a story written by a Christian woman who lived in Germany during the Nazi holocaust of the Jews. She said that right outside her Church was a railroad line, and frequently, while the community was gathered for prayer on Sunday morning they would hear trains going past. At one point, after Hitler had come to power, as the trains went past they could hear the crying and screams of people being carried on those trains – and they realized that the screams were the cries of Jewish people being transported to their death.

Week after week, the train whistle would blow, and they would hear the sounds of the prisoners crying for help. They felt powerless to do anything, so they began singing hymns to drown out the sounds of the cries. Gradually they began to sing louder and louder because they could not stand the sound of those screams. If some of the screams continued to reach their ears, they would just sing a little louder until they could hear them no more.

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It is easy to ignore the many ways in which our culture devalues the awesome gift of human life. It is easy to bury our heads in the sand and avoid dealing with the fact that we value some lives more than others, but we are here because we choose not to bury our heads in the sand. We are here because, when it comes to abortion, we refuse to just sing a little louder.

Sometimes there is a tendency to equate pro-life issues with the issue of abortion, and indeed, abortion is the central and vitally important issue. But let's think for a moment about our own tendency to value some lives over others, without recognizing the fundamental dignity of every human life.

Do we sing a little louder when it comes to poverty? Do we just change the channel when we see images on television of children, dying of hunger in Ethiopia or Indonesia? Do we treat the dirty, mangy guy on the street with the same dignity and respect we give to our friends?

Like many other elements of our culture, the value we place on human life has become relative. But the message of Christ indicates otherwise. The incarnation of Jesus Christ signifies that the value of human life is absolute. Human life is sacred, regardless of our productivity, regardless of our earning power, regardless of our sins.

The life of the guy who works the graveyard shift at the Village Pantry is just as valuable as the life of Peyton Manning.

The life of a convicted serial murderer is just as valuable as the life of the Pope.

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The life of a bedridden great grandmother is just as valuable as the life of the CEO for Eli Lilly Corporation.

The life of a mother is just as valuable as the life of the child who was conceived in her womb just moments before.

Why? Because God was once a human embryo. God became human, and so, our humanity became sacred. The value of human life is sacred, and every person's right to live that life with dignity is absolute.

Brothers and sisters to be pro-life is to choose not to sing a little louder. Not when it comes to abortion or euthanasia or poverty or any other offense against the dignity of human life. To be pro-life is to see the dignity of Christ in everyone. To be pro-life is to recognize our own imperfect tendency to value some lives more than others, and then to do something to change that. +