

**Homily for the Springfield March for Life Mass
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
January 21, 2022**

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Reverend Fathers, Deacons, Consecrated Religious, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good that we are here for our Springfield March for life Mass. We have students from across our diocese here today to pray and give witness to our respect for all human life from conception to natural death. At the same time that we are gathered here, people from across the United States are gathering in Washington, D.C, for the national March for Life, from the nation's Capitol to the United States Supreme Court Building. Here in Springfield, after Mass we will peacefully and prayerfully march from our Cathedral to the Illinois State Capitol, past the Illinois Supreme Court Building and the Governor's mansion. This is fitting since so much evil legislation attacking unborn human life has been perpetrated in these halls of state government, as they have in have in the halls of our federal government in Washington, D.C.

Tomorrow will mark 49 years since the United States Supreme Court announced their infamous pro-abortion decision in the case of *Roe v. Wade* on January 22, 1973. The recent oral arguments in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson* give hope to pro-life advocates that *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned entirely or at least in part before that wrongly-decided case reaches the half-century mark.

First, we should ask: what was wrong with the decision in *Roe v. Wade*? There are many things wrong with this poorly-reasoned decision, not the least of which was that it took a highly-debated issue out of the political process of legislative deliberation and fabricated a fictional constitutional right to abortion out of the supposed “penumbras” that emanate from the United States Constitution.

Most significantly, the Court in *Roe v. Wade* pretended to ignore the basic question at hand when it declared, “We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins.” That is precisely what the Court did, however, when it invalidated state laws declaring that human life begins at conception. That is comparable to the horrible decision rendered in 1857 when the United States Supreme Court by a 7-2 majority held in the case of *Dred Scott* that black people could never be citizens of the United States.

While that terrible decision was overturned just eleven years later, it took a civil war and the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 to repudiate that unjust ruling.

In a commentary published in *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*, Dr. Grazie Pozo Christie, a diagnostic radiologist, wrote about "[The Obsolete Science Behind Roe v. Wade](#)." Dr. Christie submitted a friend-of-the-court brief in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, in which she was joined by two other female physicians, a neonatologist and an obstetrician, pointing out that ultrasound technology "was in its infancy in the 1970s, when there was much more uncertainty about life before birth. The first ultrasound machines, introduced in 1958, were enormous, and the images were rudimentary. It was only in the later 1970s that fetal ultrasound became widely available, with increasingly detailed images of recognizably human babies. Black-and-white ultrasound images are now found on refrigerators of expectant parents across America. New three-dimensional images have put a human face on the person once dehumanized as a mere clump of cells."

These ultrasound images make it perfectly apparent now that babies are fully alive and human at 15 weeks of gestation—the age at which Mississippi proposes to protect them from elective termination. Dr. Christie

explains further, “A healthy baby at 15 weeks is an active baby. Unless the child is asleep, kicking and arm-waving are commonly seen during ultrasound evaluations. The fetal spine is a marvel of intricacy, and it is most often gently curved as the fetus rests against the mother’s uterine wall. Often, I watch as babies plant their feet against the uterine wall and stretch vigorously. Sometimes a delicate hand – with all five fingers – approaches the face and appears to scratch an itch. Fingernails aren’t visible, but they are present. We can see how the bones of the leg meet the tiny ankles and the many-boned feet.

“At 15 weeks, the brain’s frontal lobes, ventricles, and thalamus fill the oval-shaped skull. The baby’s profile is endearing in its petite perfection: gently sloping nose, distinct upper and lower lips, eyes that open and close. With the advent of 3D ultrasound, we can now see the fetal face in all its detail.”

Dr. Christie concludes, “These are the patients I encounter daily in my work as a radiologist. Clearly human, clearly alive, no longer mysteriously hidden from the eyes and knowledge of man, they ask us to consider them not disposable nonhumans but valuable members of our human family.”

We must also ask, however: what will happen if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned? Legally, overturning *Roe v. Wade* will not bring about an immediate end to abortion, but will simply return the matter to the states and to the legislative process. That means that our pro-life efforts in Illinois would just be at the beginning of a new chapter. That is because the Illinois General Assembly passed the *Act Concerning Abortion of 2017*, signed by then-Governor Bruce Rauner, which provided for taxpayer funding of abortion and removed the provision in Illinois law that would have automatically outlawed abortion if the Supreme Court were to modify or overturn *Roe v. Wade*. The Illinois General Assembly then passed the *Reproductive Health Act of 2019*, signed by Governor J.B. Pritzker, which declared abortion to be a fundamental right, while also declaring that an unborn baby does not have independent rights under the laws of this state. As a result, [abortions in Illinois increased 7 percent](#) in the year after the law was enacted expanding taxpayer funding of abortion and [Illinois has become a haven for those seeking an abortion](#) from neighboring states with stricter abortion laws. This pro-abortion environment in Illinois was further worsened by Governor Pritzker's signing of the repeal of Parental Notice of Abortion Act just one week before this past Christmas. So we pro-life

advocates have a daunting task ahead of us to reverse this culture of death in our State.

We must not let these distressing facts discourage our determination to protect human life from conception to natural death, but should rather underscore the urgency of the situation and spur us on to intensify our pro-life efforts to change minds and hearts, with the help of God's grace.

Our scripture readings for today's Mass give us strong encouragement for our pro-life efforts. Our first reading from the First Book of Samuel (24:3-21) shows David protecting the life of King Saul, despite the fact that Saul was trying to kill David!

Saul wants to see David dead. Saul's son Jonathan convinces him to spare David's life, but eventually Saul pursues him again. David could slay Saul but does not. Saul openly repents of his anger against David but maintains some antagonism toward him.

There are several ironies here. Once again, the odds are against David. Saul is heavily armed and supported by a great army. David appears at several intervals to be vulnerable and alone. He even has to go against the advice of his own supporters. Yet Saul, for the most vulnerable of reasons, enters the cave alone where David is hiding. It appears to be night, for Saul

only recognizes David when he speaks. But Saul leaves daylight and 3,000 men to encounter David alone, on equal footing. Conceivably, Saul could have summoned his army to cut David down as soon as they stepped out into daylight. But all things happen only in God's time and God's way.

So, too, we must seek to protect the lives of the unborn, trusting that good things will happen in God's time and in God's way.

Jesus' relationship with the Twelve has a similar dynamic. The passage today from the Gospel of Saint Mark (3:13-19) is about the call of the Twelve Apostles. Before Jesus calls them, he spends time in prayer. Then He calls each of them by name, "that they might be with Him, and He might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." So, too, God calls each one of us by name, so that we might preach the Gospel of Life, and drive out the demons of the culture of death.

Although they follow Jesus and profess commitment to him, each apostle has moments of mistrust, doubt, or outright antagonism. Peter denies him; Thomas doubts him; Judas betrays him. God transforms their human failings into strengths.

We also may have moments of doubt in our relationship with God. Perhaps it is natural for us to question God's will and wonder why God has

allowed abortion to flourish. But God respects human freedom and calls us from our doubts into a sure and certain trust that choosing the divine will over our own can lead us to fulfillment in the reign of God.

Back in the middle of the 19th century, most people assumed that slavery would always exist in this nation; people thought that its spread might be limited, at best. President Abraham Lincoln remained strong in his convictions in the face of fierce opposition, and eventually his efforts led to the abolition of slavery in the U.S.

So too, it may seem to us that abortion is here to stay, but we cannot give up hope or slacken our efforts to bring about an end to the scourge of abortion.

Most mothers and fathers who consider aborting their children do so because they are afraid. They are afraid that they will not be able to care for their children. We in the pro-life movement must expand our already extensive efforts through our women's centers and Catholic Charities programs to offer life-affirming and healing services to women in crisis pregnancies, either by helping them to have access to the resources they need to care for their babies, or if they are not able to do so, to assist them in giving

their children up for adoption to the many adoptive parents that are ready, willing, and able to care for them.

These are the just some of the ways that we are called to end the scourge of abortion, with the help of God's grace. In this Respect Life Mass, we turn now to ask for God's grace as He comes into our hearts in this Eucharist.

May God give us this grace. Amen.