

**Diocese of Springfield in Illinois Pro-Life Mass prior to the March for Life  
St. Peter Church, 313 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, SE, Washington, DC  
January 24, 2011 (10:00 AM)**

**† Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

S.S.P.: *“Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven” (Psalm 85)*

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

When he was running for President, Bill Clinton uttered the mantra that supposedly expresses the goal for people who call themselves “pro-choice,” namely that abortion should be “safe, legal and rare.”

The “legal” part we know about all too well. In fact, that is why we are here today, because in 1973 here in Washington, DC, the United States Supreme Court made abortion on demand legal with its decisions in the cases of *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*.

As far as “rare” is concerned, the Alan Guttmacher Institute reports that, from 1973 through 2008, nearly 50 million legal abortions were performed in the United States. In 2008, 1.21 million abortions were performed in this country.<sup>1</sup> Over one million abortions per year does not sound very “rare.”

Let's look at "safe." A doctor who ran a women's clinic in Philadelphia was accused last Wednesday of "delivering seven babies and then killing them by severing their spinal cords with scissors." Prosecutors also accused Dr. Kermit B. Gosnell of "causing the death of a patient who overdosed on anesthesia." According to Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams, the doctor "staffed his 'decrepit and unsanitary clinic' entirely with unlicensed personnel and let them practice medicine on unsuspecting patients unsupervised. . . . The grand jury report also found that for nearly two decades, government health and licensing officials had received reports about practices at the clinic but no action was taken."<sup>2</sup> The grand jury concluded that Dr. Gosnell was allowed to perform abortions for years "because oversight agencies ignored reports and failed to stop the activities at his clinic."<sup>3</sup>

The former Governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell, said last Friday that he was "flabbergasted to learn that the Department of Health did not think their authority to protect public health extended to clinics offering abortion services. . . . It was simply preposterous that the department took this position, ever."<sup>4</sup>

Because of such abuses, in contrast to abortion advocates who call themselves “pro-choice,” we who are dedicated to the pro-life cause believe that safety would not even be an issue if abortions were non-existent, and a step toward eradicating this evil would be to make it illegal for doctors or anyone else to perform an abortion.

We are here in Washington, DC, today to promote this pro-life agenda with thousands of others who will take part in the March for Life this afternoon because they believe as we do in the sanctity of life from the moment of conception to natural death.

Perhaps the basis for the different views of pro-life and pro-abortion advocates is how each answers the question, “Who is in charge, God or I?” It is the question that echoes through the history of man, from Eden to America. Who owns the world, and what is it for?

The prophet Isaiah proclaims a dominion that belongs entirely to God, and in God’s kingdom “right will dwell in the desert and justice abide in the orchard.” Thus the Psalmist announces that “Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven” (Psalm 85). And Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount that “they who hunger and thirst for holiness” are blessed, for “they shall have their fill.”

The promise of the beatitudes is a great reward in heaven. Too often our politicians, government officials and judges seem to forget the Final Judgment that we will all face one day before Almighty God. Too often do Catholic politicians, government officials and judges abandon their faith and pursue an agenda contrary to the divine and natural law. Too often do they forget that God is in charge, not our worldly leaders. Too often do they deny that all life and all meaning belong to God. We are God's, and so is all creation.

It all belongs to God, the rising sun and the blue skies, the birds of the air and the waves of the ocean, the human heart and a baby's smile, a bowl of wheat or a plate of pasta, a glass of wine or a bottle of milk. As the Psalmist reminds us, it all belongs to God, for His is the earth and all of its fullness. It was all made by His hand out of love for us, and we, the crowning achievement of his creation, are made in His image and likeness.

So from the beginning we and all creation were made to reflect His love and to participate in the continuing creation of God's goodness. Making everything out of nothing ... love out of hate ... light out of darkness ... hope out of despair ... life out of death.

Jesus showed us the way to heaven and gave us the answers we need to pass the final judgment. We will be judged on whether we used this world's goods to love or to be selfish, whether we opened our arms, our hearts, and our lives to the poor or whether we grabbed for all the political power, money and pleasure we could get.

Who is the poorest, the most innocent and the most defenseless among us? Who is more susceptible to a violent death than the little child in his mother's womb? He needs the protection of a nurturing mother, of loving parents, and of a society that respects the dignity of his life.

We will be judged on whether we nurtured, loved and protected that baby even before he was born, on whether we saw him as a human being with an inalienable right to life, or simply as an inconvenient clump of cells to be disposed of like a thing we no longer want to keep.

Yet that child is neither a statistic nor a social problem. He is a human being, made in the image and likeness of God, whom we are called by Christ to love, even as the Lord loved us from the wood of the cross.

We will be judged on how we have treated the least powerful among us, and how we have loved them. For God, who is the Lord of the heavens

and the earth, has told us so: “Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me.”

It all belongs to Him, to the Christ who comes to us in the Eucharist, and who will come to judge the living and the dead.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb\\_induced\\_abortion.html](http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html), citing Jones RK and Kooistra, K., *Abortion Incidence and Access to Services in the United States*, 2008, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2011, 43(1):41-50.

<sup>2</sup> Dinah Wisenberg Brin, “Abortion Doctor Accused of Murder,” *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*, January 20, 2011, p. A5.

<sup>3</sup> Dinah Wisenberg Brin, “State Agencies Faulted in Abortion-Doctor Case,” *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*, January 21, 2011, p. A5.

<sup>4</sup> The Associated Press, “Ex-governor miffed Pennsylvania didn’t inspect its abortion clinics,” *THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER*, January 22, 2011, p. 3.