

**Homily for the Diocesan Right to Life Mass  
October 13, 2012**

**Holy Family Church  
Granite City**

**+ Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, consecrated men and women, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: for nearly forty years now we have been praying and working to overturn or reverse the wrongful Supreme Court abortion decision, *Roe v. Wade*. After so many years, some are tempted to ask, “Is it worth it when we seem to see so little from our efforts?”

Such a question is not unreasonable, given the forces often acting against us on a number of fronts. Yet we belong to Christ and to him belongs the victory (cf. Galatians 3:29). Therefore we are never without hope! We look to him with humble trust and have come today to “sing to him, [to] sing his praise, [to] proclaim all his wondrous deeds” (Psalm 105:2).

A few weeks ago some very good news came out of New York City. Under the courageous and faithful leadership of Monsignor Philip Reilly, a group of Catholics known as the Helpers of God’s Precious Infants prayed

outside of the Brooklyn Ambulatory Surgery Center, a clinic that operated both as a surgery center and an abortuary. For twenty-two years they gathered “not simply to save babies but,” as Msgr. Reilly said, “to save souls. Indeed the Helpers are present not simply to witness to the truth but to convert people to the truth and change hearts.”<sup>1</sup>

Day after day, week after week, they gathered and counseled, sang and prayed. All the while they remained peaceful, followed the law, and did not respond to the jaunts and jeers from abortion supporters. Finally, these many years later, the abortuary – the largest in New York City and at one time in the country – has been sold and will no longer perform abortions. Yes, though for many years our efforts may seem to bear little fruit, it is well worth our efforts!

The cause of the closing is directly related to the prayers and protests. It was becoming difficult for the Brooklyn Ambulatory Surgical Center to find both patients and doctors. The previous owner admitted, “We were trying to do both [surgeries and abortions] and it just wasn’t working. We would have gone out of business.”<sup>2</sup> The new owners have renovated the surgical center and reopened it only as an outpatient surgery center. At least twenty doctors have already indicated an interest in working at the

new clinic where no abortions will be performed and Msgr. Reilly was invited to bless the recently opened New York Center for Specialty Surgery.

As good as this news is, it is not the best of the news to have come out of New York City. The president of the local branch of the National Organization for Women, Julie Kirshner, warned, "If [the clinic on 43<sup>rd</sup> St.] closed down, this could mean future closings and that's very disappointing."<sup>3</sup> Yes, to Christ belongs the victory! Let us therefore "glory in his holy name; rejoice, O hearts that seek the LORD" (Psalm 105:3)!

My friends, we have come today to the altar of the Lord to give thanks for the gift of human life. We have asked for the grace to "remain faithful to this sacred trust and constant in safeguarding the dignity of human life" (*Collect*). I thank you for your many prayers and sacrifices offered to further the culture of life. To you the words of the Lord are rightly addressed: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it" (Luke 11:28). I urge you not to lose hope if the fruit of our efforts seems at times to be small. Keep your eyes fixed on Christ! "Look to the LORD in his strength [and] seek to serve him constantly" (Psalm 105:4)!

We must remember that our efforts are not simply about saving babies but about saving souls and converting hearts to the truth of the Gospel of Life. Each of us therefore must be thoroughly imbued with the Culture of Life in our thoughts, words, and actions. Moreover, our thoughts, words and actions must be consistent with what we believe. It is not only inconsistent but also morally *impossible* to be “personally opposed” to abortion while claiming not to wish to “impose” one’s views upon the law. The only important question for anyone who takes the position of “I am personally opposed, but don’t want to impose” is whether he or she supports laws which expose some people – namely, those in the womb -- to being killed. It is a matter of yes or no, and there is no “personal” as opposed to “public” about it. The question is intrinsically, and entirely, *public*. In whatever we think, say, or do, the love of Christ must be reflected; we must become the mirror of his love.

In a few minutes, after receiving the supreme gift of the Lord’s love in the Eucharist, we will begin our short pilgrimage to the so-called “Hope Clinic for Women.” Too many women go there looking for hope but leave in despair. We go to reveal the merciful love of Jesus Christ, to let those without authentic hope know that they belong to Christ and so do the

children in their wombs. The message of hope we bring is simple: “The Lord remembers his covenant forever” (Psalm 105:8). He will not – and has not – abandoned them and neither will we.

As we walk we will pray the Rosary of Our Lady who carried within her womb of the Lord of heaven and earth, he who is our only true hope. Let us ask Mary to wrap her mantle around those who have no hope, to comfort them, and to lead them to her Son.

Let us be peaceful and respectful as we pray that the “Hope Clinic for Women,” which is really a hopeless abortion clinic, will be the next abortuary to close due to the prayers and protests, counsels and hymns, of Catholics who hear the word of God and observe it.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Ed Wilkinson, “A Miracle Happens at Sunset Park Abortuary,” *The Tablet*, September 19, 2012. Available at <http://thetablet.org/?p=17475>. Accessed October 9, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Terry Lazar, quoted in Mark Morales, “Sunset Park clinic will no longer offer abortions, instead only outpatient surgical care,” *New York Daily News*, October 1, 2012. Available at [http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-10-01/news/34202394\\_1\\_abortion-clinic-new-clinic-clinic-owner](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-10-01/news/34202394_1_abortion-clinic-new-clinic-clinic-owner). Accessed October 9, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Mark Morales, “Sunset Park clinic will no longer offer abortions, instead only outpatient surgical care,” *New York Daily News*, October 1, 2012. Available at [http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-10-01/news/34202394\\_1\\_abortion-clinic-new-clinic-clinic-owner](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-10-01/news/34202394_1_abortion-clinic-new-clinic-clinic-owner). Accessed October 9, 2012.