

**Homily for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus  
Sacred Heart Church of Saint Katharine Drexel Parish  
Springfield, Illinois**

**June 24, 2022**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear priests, brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is very providential that, on this Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson*, in which, by a vote of six to three, the Justices of the Supreme Court overturned the infamous and wrongful decision of *Roe v. Wade*, which had declared abortion to be a constitutional right. Although the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated today because it occurs in the liturgical calendar on the Friday after *Corpus Christi*, normally June 24<sup>th</sup> is the Solemnity of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist. How fitting that in future years the anniversary of the United States declaring in *Dobbs v. Jackson* that abortion is not a constitutional right will be observed on the birthday of Saint John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Our Lord and Savior!

Today's decision by the Supreme Court of the United States marks an important moment for our nation, lifting a cloud that has hung over our country for nearly a half century.

There is no way to undo the tragedy of tens of millions of innocent lives lost or the decades of division sown by the *Roe v. Wade* decision. But, for the sake of future generations, we can now move forward with a more honest debate and efforts to advance policies and support programs that protect innocent life and promote stability and security for vulnerable mothers. Much work remains to be done on both fronts, and that work will now necessarily have more of a local focus, particularly in our own home state of Illinois. Importantly, these efforts must include prayer and concerted efforts to preserve peace in the face of recent violence, intimidation, and criminal vandalism against churches and government officials.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart refers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a "furnace burning of charity" for souls. Saint John Paul II expounded on this metaphor, saying: "The Heart of Jesus, the human heart of Jesus, burns with the love with which it is overflowing. This love of His is love for the Eternal Father and love for man — the Father's adopted daughters and sons."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to giving thanks to God in this Eucharist for the overflowing love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart is also traditionally understood as a time of atonement and reparation. We must make sincere atonement and reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the many sins of abortion that have been committed over the years. We must also pray for the conversion of those who continue to deny that the right to life of unborn babies should be protected from the moment of conception. Such conversion comes through God's grace, with which we generously cooperate by giving an example of our care for children and adults throughout life until the moment of natural death.

In this regard, we in the Catholic Church – clergy, religious, as well the lay Christian faithful – must redouble our already robust efforts to help mothers and their children. This includes volunteering and giving to crisis pregnancy centers, Catholic Charities, Catholic food banks, St. Vincent de Paul Societies, and organizations like the Catholic Children's Home in Alton and the St. Martin de Porres Center in Springfield. The people of the pro-life movement must increase their commitment to helping organizations like

these as today's ruling and a culture that is more and more recognizing the dignity of human life inside the womb will mean more support is needed.

That support will also be needed in our area specifically because Illinois politicians passed laws in recent years making the killing of human life in the womb a "fundamental right." These politicians are already advertising around the Midwest that Illinois will welcome mothers here for abortion. So, with abortion becoming more pronounced in Illinois, our work to defend human life and help mothers and their children must become more pronounced.

We will most likely see after today's Supreme Court's ruling, much like we already saw in May, pro-abortion activists destroying property, interrupting church services, and turning to violence and intimidation to force their destructive agenda down the throats of people who believe all life is sacred. For nearly fifty years, the guise of catchphrases like "choice," "reproductive rights," and "women's health," has normalized the killing of innocent children in the womb, so it is not unexpected these activists will turn to violence. When evil loses its grip on something, it uses evil to fight back. So, we in the pro-life movement must stand strong and faithful, but

always peaceful, as we promote civility and common concern for our neighbor, so our culture can prosper.

Science has proven that a unique human being is present at the moment of conception. The sound of a heartbeat and image of the child on an ultrasound machine proves just that. Every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. Our prayers today should be to thank God for the Supreme Court's ruling and for more people to embrace the greatest gift, the gift of life.

Last Sunday, we celebrated the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, traditionally known by its name in Latin, *Corpus Christi*. This year's celebration of *Corpus Christi* marked the opening of the three-year Eucharistic Revival announced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops "to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist." Our celebrations of *Corpus Christi* and the Sacred Heart of Jesus are closely related to each other, not just in the liturgical calendar, but in their theological significance as well. For it is in the Eucharist that Christ most generously pours out His love for us, for which we give thanks. May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Saint John Paul II, *Angelus*, June 23, 1985.