Post *Roe*, Fighting for the Unborn More Important than Ever

A week from Monday, on January 22nd, MCCL (Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life) will have the annual March for Life at the state capitol. This has been done for many years to mark the *Roe v. Wade* decision that was thankfully finally overturned, and continues now post *Roe* to bring attention to the importance of fighting for life. As we all know, the killing of the unborn is still widespread, in particular in our own state where radical pro-abortion legislation has become the law, permitted up until birth.

The *Dobbs* decision was a welcome thing we have prayed for for years. But in the nearly two years since that, it seems the pro-abortion groups have dominated much of the conversation; we've seen this in ad after ad during election season with hardly anything from pro-life groups or politicians. So now that the issue has returned to states, and voters have more power than ever on this issue, how can we as Catholics work to develop a pro-life mentality? We use the word "justice" a lot these days; some see it in the legal term, others see it more in the social term of assisting others through charitable acts. Ending the life of an unborn child covers both. A person has a right to life, and this life is sacred. Time and time again, Christ preaches and speaks out against injustice, which ultimately are to "undo the works of the devil" which are lies and murder – something that the "family planning" industry quietly does on a daily basis, lying to a woman before hurting her and taking her unborn child. Social justice is a life issue in that we argue for social justice based on the dignity of the human person, something abortion denies.

That is why it is so important for you and I to speak up. There are numerous ways we can get involved.

One is by educating ourselves. Someone told me if you ask any parent who sees an ultrasound of their unborn child, its hard to conceive how someone could then go on to not have the child. While many in the world would call an unborn child not life but potential life, consider how much development occurs in just the initial weeks and months: blood flow by the fourth to fifth week; heart development between 18 and 25 days, and fingers and toes by the sixth week. Its understandable in that during the initial weeks when one can't see someone as being pregnant one might think that there is no life present – but indeed, we have a human being, and so many just aren't aware of all that happens in the first moments of life. On top of this, we should educate ourselves on the laws and just how many radical abortion laws have been passed in our own state over the last year, and also educate ourselves on where candidates stand on the issue as we are voting this year for president, the US House and Senate, and the State House of Representatives. Study who you vote for and where they are at on the issue of life. The more we know, the more we can use that knowledge to change minds and hearts.

Secondly, forgiveness and compassion. Its what we preach as a Church, and its what we must live out. The Church is there to help women and those affected by abortion offering not just forgiveness through the sacraments, but also to help people find the resources they need to heal. The sad thing is so many woman feel the guilt set in. Some have felt pressured to have an abortion because of the attitude of family. Many other women simply have the abortion while other friends and family members never speak up or reach out to help, or let the time pass without reaching out to ease the woman's pain, but simply let the wounds grow with silence or,

even worse, use it to harm the person. Or some even wish evil upon abortionists or those who work at an abortion clinic. We have to strive to reach out to help those who were hurt by abortion, by taking the time to talk with them when they seek our help. We should also pray both for the victims of abortion, but also for those involved in the killing of unborn children.

Third, we need to get involved. We have an amazing Pro Life group here at Saint Joe's, consider joining them. We should consider life issues when we go to a caucus or vote for someone, and while the Church doesn't endorse candidates, the bishops of the United States have given us a great document entitled "Faithful Citizenship" that gives us an idea of what issues should be looked at, and speaks on abortion. Minnesota will have caucuses coming up later this winter as we enter the election year. Hopefully we keep that issue in mind at the polls. Our legislators greatly effect abortion, and the last session unfortunately had much pro-abortion legislation. We can also get involved by helping support Pro-Life centers that offer free ultrasounds to women, and with groups who help support mothers in need with baby formula, clothing and resources to help them choose life.

Fourth, don't be afraid to argue. Arguing is not shouting louder than the other person or making attacks on social media, it means engaging people. Many people take the mentality that this is a "private" issue or something they might not do, but wouldn't want to tell others how to act. We need though to change this mindset. People will sometimes get very emotional or angry on the topic; I remember last Easter, a person who was not a parishioner was "parish shopping" and they were upset that I brought up the *Dobbs* decision in my Easter homily. (I devoted all of 10 to 20 seconds on it, using it as an example of how the Christian needs to act and proclaim their faith, and in my response to the person who wrote in, told them the stance against abortion is a dogma of our faith, and we have a very active pro-life group, and that it was one of several examples I used. I never heard back from them.). After we've equipped ourselves with the knowledge on the topic, from all that happens with respect to development of the unborn child, and also of how the abortion industry operates in victimizing both the mother and unborn child, we can engage in deeper conversations with people. These might entail pushback, and anger, but they might get people to think and eventually change hearts and minds - but only if we are not afraid.

And finally, we have to be vigilant and be on guard to avoid apathy. Many think nothing ever changes; but things do change when we vote, are politically active, engage others on an important topic, and never give up. It is a fact *Dobbs* has saved thousands of lives. So many of us never thought we'd see the overturning of *Roe*, but here we are. The work though continues.

As Christians, may we never give up the fight for life, and be vigilant in seeing abortion laws and the attitudes of some in society not as something that will never change, or seeing those who are in favor of abortion as the enemy, but rather through prayer, action, compassion and dialogue remember we have so much power to save lives and change hearts.

Have a blessed week!

Fr. Paul