

From Your Pastor

Choose Life and Not Death (Dt 30:11-20)

This Thursday, January 22, we mark the 36th anniversary of the tragic Supreme Court Decision legalizing abortion in the United States. The Alan Guttmacher Institute, which tracks abortion, reports the following:

- There are 1.31 million abortions in the United States each year
- U.S. abortion rate is among the highest in developed countries
- The U.S. abortion rate per 100 is 24.5
- 48% of women now seeking abortions have had at least one previous abortion (Cf. www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion)

In *Roe v. Wade* the Supreme Court ruled that abortion may not be restricted at all in the first trimester of pregnancy. In the second trimester abortion may be regulated only for the mother's health. After "viability," abortion may be prohibited except where necessary to preserve the mother's health. *Roe's* companion case, *Doe v. Bolton*, defined maternal "health" as "all factors - physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age - relevant to the well-being of the patient." The result of these decisions has been an uncritical and wholesale acceptance in society of the reality of abortion. The Guttmacher Institute reports that women who have had abortions cite the following reasons:

- 21% can't afford a baby
- 21% are unready for responsibility
- 16% are concerned about how having a baby could change their lives
- 12% have problems with relationships or want to avoid single parenthood
- 11% are not mature enough/are too young to have children
- 8% have all the children they want/have all grown up children
- 3% possible fetal health position
- 3% maternal health problem
- 1% pregnancy resulted from rape or incest
- 1% husband/partner wants them to have an abortion
- 1% don't want others to know they had sex or are pregnant (Cf. www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion)

In the face of this abortion-on-demand, the Church steadfastly and tirelessly proclaims a Gospel of Life. Convinced by natural reason and by faith that human life is a gift of the Creator and not a human invention or commodity, we are obliged, following the example of the Lord Jesus, to defend the inalienable right to life and the

inherent dignity of every human person from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death.

"Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practice them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator." (Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 27)

Because the consciences of so many have become dulled - including, tragically, brothers and sisters in the Catholic community - the choice for abortion has become a legally accepted part of the fabric of our society. As a consequence of this scandal, we have become conditioned to overlook or to choose to ignore the true horror that abortion really is - not only for its victims, but, as the Council tells us, for ourselves.

On Tuesday of this week, the nation will give witness to the blessing of our democracy with the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States. By his own choice, Mr. Obama will take the oath of office with his hand on the same Bible that President Abraham Lincoln used at his first inauguration in 1861. What a grace it would be if Lincoln's just and courageous work as an emancipator of the slave inspired in President Obama the desire to work righteously towards the emancipation of the unborn. I look forward to and pray for that day when we will look at the child in the womb not as someone's property, but as the person he or she is with the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Until that inevitable day of emancipation, the Bishops of the United States have set aside January 22 as a day of penance for the violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and as a day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. May God, the Author and Sustainer of life, lead us to genuine penance and to a greater commitment to the Gospel of Life which his Son entrusted to us. May our lives radiate the choice for life, not death.



God bless each of you.

Mrs. Fay