

In today's Gospel we read about Jesus traveling through out the Holy Land and calling several men to become Apostles. 4 men, 2 sets of brothers, Simon, later to be named Peter, Andrew, James and John. Men, who in this moment start the journey from obscurity as simple fishermen for eternal life as Saints in heaven through their faith in Jesus Christ.

If we were paying attention, we may note the event, and wonder what this has to do with us and miss the point. The scriptures are written for us, right here, right now, today. Today Jesus isn't calling James and John, he isn't only calling 4 guys, he is calling each and every one of us to renew our commitment to follow him. To recognize that we aren't just computer geeks, students, Soldiers, or housewives, we are disciples of Jesus, destined for eternal life as Saints with him in heaven. Same call, same requirements in how we live our lives, just different vocations.

Part of how we live our lives has to do with how we treat other people, particularly the least of those among us, the infirm, the elderly and the unborn, those who don't have any apparent value to society, the most vulnerable of God's children.

On Monday we will mourn as we make note of the anniversary of the US Supreme Court Decision, Roe vs. Wade. The 23rd of January 1973 where a stroke of the pen has caused more deaths, pain and suffering than the 7th of December 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor and the 9th of September 2001, the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon combined.

From a secular perspective, our Declaration of Independence begins with the words "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The order that these rights are listed in isn't an accident. Without liberty, a person cannot pursue happiness, without life, being allowed to live; there cannot be any liberty.

According to President Abraham Lincoln and many others, these opening words of the document that established our desire to become a nation represent the moral standard to which we should

strive as a nation; a standard that have failed to meet. To add irony to the situation Norma McCorvey, the woman represented by the pseudonym 'Jane Roe' in this case never had an abortion. She has raised 3 beautiful children and has become a pro-life activist.

I present the secular argument because when we confront a secularist, an argument for the sanctity of life based on our faith doesn't carry much weight. For us as Catholics we understand that life begins at conception. That mass of multiplying cells in the womb is a person, a child of God, fully deserving the same dignity and respect that we all want and deserve as children of God, from conception to our natural death.

Unfortunately, abortion has become big business in the United States. Government subsidized, billions of dollars, millions of deaths with nothing to show but profit, pain and misery. There hasn't been a single scientific breakthrough or cure for disease developed from fetal tissue and knowing what Our Lady thinks about the issue, there won't be any in the future.

What about the other end of the equation? What about the women and men who for what ever reason, are caught up in the abortion grinder? What can we do to reach out to them? Can there be forgiveness for such a horrific act, the murder of a helpless child?

There is always forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Thankfully our God is a merciful God. If Jesus can forgive the people who crucified him, then he will forgive this sin as well. There are 2 other steps that are much more difficult then the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The first is overcoming the sin of pride and resulting hardness of heart in order to allow Our Lord's grace and mercy to guide these people to Reconciliation. Very few of the people involved in abortions participate for profit or political gain. Most, that is those considering an abortion, receive bad advice, and pressure from society and their peers during an emotionally charged period in their lives and make a very bad decision. Then they have to live with that decision for the rest of their lives and if they don't reconcile through the sacrament, into eternity.

Recognizing that we can't condone their actions, we can and should still support them as children of God, broken by sin, just like we are children of God, broken by sin. Through our love and support we can lead them back to the loving arms of God. This takes time, prayer and patience. We just need to remember that God hasn't given up on us, so we shouldn't give up on them.

Once pride has been set aside and humility steps in, the second great challenge is in helping these living victims forgive themselves. I can't imagine the pain that comes from the realization that you are responsible for killing a child, or even worse, your own child.

I watched my own sister's life slowly disintegrate from the day she had an abortion until her death. Constantly looking for forgiveness, but unwilling to set her pride aside and come back to the church where what she really wanted and needed was waiting for her. Through the grace of God a Priest attended her to on her deathbed, comforting for me, salvation for her.

How do you think her unborn child greeted her at the gates of heaven? Do you think the child was angry? Bitter? Not even possible.

Heaven is a place of perfection, a place of perfect love. When my sister arrived, her child was there to greet her with love. If it wasn't for my sister, that child would not have been conceived, would not ever know the joys of heaven, would not ever know the love of God and Mary our mother.

The primary victims of abortion don't hate, they love. It is through that love, through their intercessory prayers that the secondary victims, the mothers, the people who advocated for the abortion, the practitioners and politicians have advocates in heaven for their salvation. Through their love, the people in the mother's circle who advocated against the abortion, the tertiary victims can find peace and the ability to forgive.

Our Lord's journey described in the Gospel today is from the desert into the land controlled by Herod, from relative safety to the place where he would step on snakes and scorpions. A journey of courage to save us from our sins through his own suffering and death, a journey of love.

As we confront the evils present in the culture of death that surrounds us; let us go forward not in a rage, not with tantrums and destruction, but with love and confront those evils remembering that those who support abortion are also victims of the culture of death that they support.