

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jan 22nd 2015

“To do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!”

Deep within each of us is an inherent, God-given awe and respect of life. Try as our culture may to tarnish the value of human life and mock us for protecting it, nothing comes close to the delight of enjoying God’s presence in another person. For example, in spite of the fright of a young couple, unsure of their future, uncertain about their finances, ridiculed by their peers, the utter beauty of having conceived a new life overshadows any possible negativity.

Especially today, on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, (the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision which struck down all state and federal laws prohibiting abortion in the U.S.) we have cause to pause and reflect on the gravity of our decision whether to allow God’s law within our hearts to guide us in doing his will. Over the years since that decision, over 55 million people have lost their lives to abortion. One of the most tragic events in American history was the terrorist attack on September 11th when 2,996 people lost their lives. And yet by comparison, abortion has killed the entire population of New York City. Six times.

One of my primary goals as a physician is to improve either the quality or quantity of a patient’s life. Participation or support for actively ending a life, most notably through abortion or euthanasia, is directly contrary to that goal. The power to decide who lives and who dies is a power too great for me, or any human, to hold.

Even with these blatantly clear goals in mind, the challenges of daily life wear on us and taint that intrinsic tendency toward celebration of the living. In medicine, for example, I am ashamed to admit that I sometimes need to fight the cultural temptation to deem some lives “not worth living.” It’s often situations such as a severely mentally handicapped patient who spends months at a time in our hospital secondary to aspiration pneumonia or the group of homeless alcoholics who are admitted only for kidney dialysis, which prolongs their lives. Those are the types of situations that challenge my morals.

I am ashamed of these tendencies and hate to even admit to them. It’s only, however, in recognizing these prejudices within my heart that I am able to take the steps toward celebrating even those lives. God loves each of those lives as fully and infinitely as he loves me. With God’s help, I can recognize the beauty in every one of the lives he creates.

Just like we should do daily, infants present themselves even from conception to our God singing, “Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.” It is utterly bewildering that we should deny them the chance to live for their Lord. We spend a lot of time talking about the right to education, or employment, or to vote, or to marry, or to bear arms, but none of these matter without the right to be born.

Not for what we think our friends want to hear, not for what we believe will be safest, and certainly not for what will keep us comfortable, rather we speak, stand, vote, and pray for the actualization of the law that God has taught to each of our hearts.

“I announced your justice in the vast assembly;

I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.”

On this, the day of prayer for the legal protection of unborn children, join me in praying for a world where all lives are not only allowed the right to a birth, but also cherished dearly.

Sam Pierre - Creighton University Alegent Creighton Health Center