

“THE END DEPENDS UPON THE BEGINNING”: STANDING FOR LIFE FROM CONCEPTION

The Roman orator **Cicero** (†43 B. C.) demonstrated tremendous practical wisdom. In one of his most quoted aphorisms, he wrote: “Not to know what happened before one was born is always to be a child.” (*De Oratore* XXXIV). I am in full agreement, which is one reason I am such a proponent of knowing history. With last week’s historic U.S. Supreme Court *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision, it’s significance cannot be underestimated from myriad perspectives. For starters, it dawned upon me just how significant it is even from the standpoint of living Americans. It may surprise you to know that approximately 2/3 of Americans today were **born after** the infamous *Roe v. Wade* U.S. Supreme Court decision on 22 Jan. 1973. The vast majority of Americans have **never** lived in a nation without **constitutionally protected** legal abortion. It is all they have known.

There will be plenty of time to digest the contents of the *Dobbs* decision; its implications will play out differently in each of our fifty states. Though extremely happy in my vocation, I think I would have enjoyed being a lawyer— especially a **constitutional** lawyer. It is fascinating! Alas, I chose a different road, and to quote Robert Frost: “I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” By less traveled, consider that **36,000 priests** are in active ministry in the U.S. According to the American Bar Association, there are **1,116,967** practicing **lawyers**! Annually, there are as many graduates (35,287) from U.S. law schools as all of us priests! My proper place is **not opining** about the intricacies of *stare decisis* or precedent in detail. Legal scholars will dissect and debate this decision for years. I am focused on how the post-*Roe* landscape will develop.

In Minnesota, I suspect **very little** will change initially. Pro-life advocates may experience a **letdown** if state laws do not change immediately. The Court ruled that the issue of abortion is properly decided by the individual states. So, the work continues! Our U.S. Constitution established a federal democratic republic form of government. It is a democracy because we the people govern ourselves. It is a republic form of government because we have an **indivisible union** of 50 sovereign states. And honestly, many forget that. The purpose of our government is to “establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity.” (U.S. Constitution preamble) The Constitution **limits** the power of the federal government. We are not France or Great Britain.

The decision clarifies the role of the Federal government: “This Court cannot bring about the permanent resolution of a rancorous national controversy simply by dictating a settlement and telling the people to move on.” But on an issue as **fundamental** as life, it **may surprise** some that in Justice Kavanaugh’s concurring opinion, he wrote: “To be clear, then, the Court’s decision today does not outlaw abortion throughout the United States. On the contrary, the Court’s decision properly leaves the question of abortion for the people and their elected representatives in the democratic process...This Court therefore does not possess the authority either to declare a constitutional right to abortion *or* to declare a constitutional prohibition of abortion.” Thus, those who hoped for the Supreme Court to **outlaw** abortion were barking up the wrong tree. It is seen as a state’s issue. Where does that leave us today?

The 1st century A.D. Roman poet Manilius wrote, “And the end depends upon the beginning.” (*Finisque ab origine pendet*). Archbishop Hebda noted in his statement following the release of the *Dobbs* decision: “For 50 years, the pro-life movement has stood in the breach, speaking up for

the babies who have no voice; for the despairing parents, the moms and dads who thought they had no choice. Our dedicated faithful have prayed daily, been assaulted verbally and physically, been threatened and yet have stood fast for life.” From the beginning, countless advocates for life refused to give up or give in. Despite rapidly changing societal mores, they clung to the belief that by working tirelessly to assist women in need, they could change hearts and minds one at a time. The **beginning** of life is **precious**. A change in law would be preceded by personal conversion.

The **task** before us is truly herculean, requiring moral strength and courage. No issue in our nation has been as **divisive** as abortion, certainly not in my lifetime. Since I was nine years old, when this issue reared its ugly head, I have prayed that we could change course. The road ahead will be arduous and confrontational. Judicial decisions form a vital, though ultimately limited role when it is hearts that most need to change. This decision, far from signaling an end to a debate, merely inaugurates a new phase, one that involves advocating for life at **every level** of state government. My heartfelt thanks go out to the tireless **apostles of life**, whose zeal, compassion and love have inspired me for half a century. God bless you!

- I extend gratitude to a handful of dedicated **parishioners** (and a few others) who assisted our staff in keeping an **extra set** of eyes on the Cathedral in this past week. People care deeply about our Cathedral and want to ensure that it remains safe, secure and welcoming sacred space.
- When offered a chance to sit in the **second row** at a Twins game last Sunday (sandwiched between the Noon and 5:00 p.m. Masses), I relaxed my own “self-imposed” rule about eschewing Sunday games! I caught innings 2-8 and was so close to the action that I thanked Twins 3B **Gio Urshela** for his “walk-up” song. He gave me a thumbs up. Every player chooses a 15-second clip of a song after they are announced, and his is from a Christian group named Building 429 (a reference to Ephesians 4:29).
- Ephesians 4:29 reads: “No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear.” Here’s is **the song**. It is catchy and has a good message— our **true home** is not here—it’s in heaven!
- Hayden Hall was **overflowing** for a neighborhood meeting about a proposed Summit Regional Trail. I agreed to host because this is a **serious** issue. When even bicycle advocates express **serious safety questions** about this regional trail along Summit, city officials need to **rethink** its plan. A narrowed Summit car lane with a raised bike trail (10mph speed limit) will frustrate serious cyclists who, wanting to ride faster, will stay in the street. Nor can we afford to **lose parking** on one side of Summit Ave.
- Pray for our **Border Patrol** agents. Can you imagine a more difficult job right now? Border agents themselves come from families. On a human and visceral level, they want to help those in need. Yet these agents are trying to root out fentanyl drug running and human trafficking. For the first time, **more than 100,000** Americans died of **drug overdoses** over a 12-month period.
- I am grateful to my Carondelet Village proofreader (**not Mom!**) who noted that I misspelled Justice Kavanaugh’s name in the June 19th bulletin. I hope she sees that it was corrected today! ☺

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector