

“ALREADY PRESENT IN THE SEED”: DEFENDING LIFE IN THE WOMB FOR 50 YEARS

Though appropriately naïve and sheltered, on January 22, 1973, the facts of life and death could no longer be hidden from this nine-year-old. I only knew that something was horribly wrong. A tragic court decision meant that some babies were not being born into this world. **Msgr. Steiner**, the long-time pastor at my home parish of Nativity of our Lord, had invited parishioners to stay after Mass for a presentation detailing the effects of the recent *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court ruling legalizing abortion. I cannot recall with any specificity his presentation, other than it was a **sad** day for me. In some key respects, innocence was lost; it is not always possible to shield even the little ones from the cruel realities of the world. Annually, the number of abortions peaked in 1990 with a staggering **1.6 million**, not including abortions that use pills obtained outside of clinical settings. While the number has decreased, the CDC utilizes voluntary reporting and several states do not report.

Let's be frank. It has been a long road these past fifty years. It is difficult to **comprehend** a number such as **64,000,000**, the National Right to Life Committee's (NRLC) estimated **total number** of abortions in this country since 1973. Another way of looking at this— think the entire population of **Thailand** or nearly that of France! This is hardly a modern phenomenon— it has been a reality for centuries. Both Greek and Latin Church Fathers knew of abortion and spoke of its evil as the taking of innocent human life. Thus, the Church's teaching on abortion has been **clear** from the very outset. The Church's outreach to assist women in difficult circumstances is equally evident. The **clarity** on moral doctrine must be backed up with an equal **charity** with respect to a willingness to help. I am proud that on this issue the Church truly has “put her money where her mouth is,” reaching out to women who find themselves with seemingly few options.

Written in 197 A.D., **Tertullian's** *Apologetics* attacked the horrors of **child sacrifice** in North Africa, then part of the Roman Empire. He added this about abortion and did not mince words: “Indeed for us murder (*homicidio*) is forbidden once and for all, so it is not permitted even to destroy what is conceived in the womb. To prohibit the birth of a child is only a faster way to murder; it makes little difference whether one destroys a life already born or prevents it from coming to birth. It is a human being, who is to be a human being, for the **whole fruit** is already present in the **seed** (*etiam fructus omnis iam in semine est.*) Other 1st century writings warned of following the path to death: “you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born.” Those who procure it and those who perform it are both set on the way of death. (cf. *Didache* and *Epistle of Barnabas*)

During his annual audience with foreign ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, **Pope Francis** noted that the defense of life is “jeopardized not only by conflicts, hunger and disease, but all too often even in the mother's womb,” adding, “Peace requires before all else the defense of life.” Building a culture of life must begin **early** on with our youth. For decades, Nativity School has sponsored a baby shower organized entirely by 5th graders. The items collected benefit clinics that assist women in crisis pregnancies so that they might carry their babies to term. It is a powerful pro-life outreach that sticks with the students for a lifetime. I am currently on pilgrimage with **four busloads** of students: Saint Agnes School (59), Unity High School (29), Holy Spirit Academy (11), youth groups from several parishes and 13 **seminarians**. Feeling my age and not relishing the overnight bus trips, my principal motive for traveling to Washington D.C. 50 years after *Roe* is to encourage the pro-life commitment of young people.

Students are visiting the seat of our **federal government**— not as a protest, as much as to **witness** to the beauty and **sanctity** of all human life. And this is a **huge difference**, one that comes at a perfect time in their own social development, as they learn both to **advocate for life** and witness effectively and persuasively to our desire to provide viable alternatives and choices to abortion. The most effective witness to life happens in coffee shops, college classrooms, at social gatherings and restaurants. It happens amongst high school students. Nor should we underestimate the powerful influence of the pro-life lapel pin featuring the precious feet. I have had more people ask me about the meaning of the **tiny feet** than you might imagine— from the State Fair to a Twins game, even once in a coffee shop in Italy. It was the perfect **conversation**

starter in any language, as the pin is the exact size and shape of an unborn baby's feet at 10 weeks after conception. Science doesn't lie!

The whole fruit is already present in the seed. Thanks to modern **fetology**, what was intuited centuries ago is biologically **indisputable** today. I pray this pilgrimage will be a powerful experience that our youth will remember for years to come. And to you, the faithful laity, I heartily encourage Friday **fasting** for the unborn. Unquestionably, it is the most beneficial spiritual practice I have undertaken in my life. Fasting can be partial (one meal, no snacks) or occasionally more complete (no solid food), but whatever you choose, it is for a good cause. Let us that we may joyfully, lovingly, peacefully and patiently witness to the sanctity of human life, with firm purpose and resolve.

- **Prodigal Shortshop?** At season's end 2022, Twins star SS **Carlos Correa** exercised his opt-out clause for the two remaining years on his contract, seeking free agency. He agreed to terms with two other teams, only to have them reconsider after a physical. The Twins felt differently and re-signed him. As loyalty is key to me, I have some mixed feelings. That said, he was a **positive influence** on his younger teammates and is clearly an All-Star caliber player. Welcome back!
- After a more than 50-year run, the **Midwest Sportsmen's Show** is pulling out of St. Paul. Citing **security concerns**, the organizers are retiring the show. I have attended previously— a fun opportunity to visit vendors who organize resorts, canoe trips and hunting excursions. In its heyday, it drew 60,000 visitors across its six-day run.
- It was **250 years ago** this month that **Captain James Cook** ventured south of the Antarctic Circle in the *HMS Resolution*, the first to cross 66°30' S latitude. I vividly recall the surging waters of the "Furious Fifties" (latitude) while serving as an Antarctica cruise chaplain in **1999**. It amazes me that a 110-ft. ship managed this feat in **1773**.
- Next weekend, the patronal Feast of St. Paul (Jan. 25) will be observed at all Masses. **Archbishop Hebdia** will celebrate the 10:00 a.m. Mass, joined by Maronite **Archbishop Samir Nassar** of Damascus, Syria. Archbishop Nassar was unable to attend last year when we blessed the beautiful new **icon** of the Baptism of Paul. A welcome reception follows in Hayden Hall.
- The heat bill for December was just north of **\$26,000!** Your generous support of our special heat collections is most appreciated.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector

