

## Mass for Life

St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Augusta

January 16, 2010

“Rejoice in the Lord always: again, I say, rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4) Now why, you wonder, did I select this passage about rejoicing when we’ve come here today deeply concerned, frustrated, angry – more in a spirit of lamentation than of rejoicing. We remember 40 million babies executed by abortion, the law of the land (though not of God!) We are governed by an administration more dedicated to the killing of babies – abortion rights – than any administration in U.S. History.

So why a Scripture telling us to rejoice? I’ll tell you why. First of all, we rejoice at the precious gift that human life is. That’s why we come here together after all. That’s why we persist in our commitment.

We rejoice that you and I are among those God has called and entrusted with the mission to do all that we can to reverse this horrendous sin in our own society. That’s something to be rejoicing about. You have been chosen for this.

We rejoice at the women and men, often in situations of extreme stress and pressure and temptation to abort, who decide to allow their unborn children to live.

We rejoice because of the constancy, and the commitment and fidelity, and the passion of all of you here this morning and so many others who will not rest until we win the victory for life once and for all. You, and the others who are committed to this cause and the other related causes that deal with the sacredness of human life, you are the salt of the earth, the light of the world about which Matthew’s Gospel speaks! You are letting your light shine -- on the beautiful gift of unborn children, and the deadly sin of abortion.

We rejoice at some of the data that we’re seeing now, some of the statistics that show that all too slowly, but in fact surely, there is gradual erosion in our country of support for so-called abortion rights.

And we rejoice at being members of a Church that will never cave in, as too many Christian churches have done, to the pathetically “politically correct” forces that are steadily attempting to abandon the 2000-year-old Christian tradition of life, of the meaning of sexuality, of marriage.

I just returned from a national ecumenical meeting on evangelization in Seattle. In the course of the meeting, one Protestant pastor came up to me and said, “You Roman Catholics have the strength of a teaching authority and a consistent, well-thought, thorough teaching on many things. Most of our denominations do not.”

We trace our opposition to abortion, of course, to the Ten Commandments. Christian traditionalists have been opposed to abortion from the very earliest year, the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century. There was an important document called the Didache, the instruction of the apostles. It said: “You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish.” From the beginning, it has been the instinct of the Catholic Church that the killing of the unborn is an evil thing.

Let's fly through the centuries to Vatican II. "God, the Lord of Life, has entrusted to men (and women) the noble mission of safeguarding life...Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception. Abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes."

Then we take it to the present moment, Pope Benedict XVI. "God's love does not differentiate between the newly conceived infant still in his or her mother's womb and the child or young person or the adult and the elderly person. God does not distinguish between them because he sees an impression of his own image and likeness in each one."

And then it says, "Everyone must be helped to become aware of the intrinsic evil of the crime of abortion. In attacking human life in its very first stages, it is also an aggression against society itself."

Society is attacked and offended by abortion

And from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: "At this ...time, abortion has become the fundamental human rights issue for all men and women of goodwill...for us, abortion is of overriding concern because it negates two of our most fundamental moral imperatives – respect for innocent life and preferential concern for the weak and defenseless."

And those are just a few appetizers from 2000 years of Catholic teaching.

The problem is not enough of our people are with us on this, or if they are in principle, I'm afraid they have become too passive! We've got to mobilize!

We need to be, in a humble way, the yeast that will help the dough of respect for life, for justice, for peace and for the civilization of life to grow here in our own Catholic community in Maine and throughout the nation.

But today, let's rejoice! Here we are! So let us rejoice in our solidarity, our determination, our passion for change! As Paul said to the Philippians, "whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, and lovely...think about these things." That's what it's about.

Hang in there! Let your light shine! And thank you! I am grateful to you and for you! Together, with our sisters and brothers of other religious traditions, our sisters and brothers with no religious traditions who are committed to the cause of life, together we can win the victory for life.