

My Dear Brother Priests,

I am compelled to speak to you with clarity and the force of the Gospel as we approach the Roe v. Wade anniversary once again. The date January 22<sup>nd</sup> marks a day when the United States ushered in its cultural acceptance of the slaughter of unborn children. The decision of the United States Supreme Court to support a so-called right to abortion has had devastating consequences for the whole world. We must never cease speaking against this diabolical decision while constantly proclaiming the sanctity of life.

After reading the above, many will protest with these words: “On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court struck down the Roe v. Wade decision.” This is true, but this recent reversal should not cause us to relax; instead, we should redouble our efforts to proclaim the Gospel of Life. The extreme and destructive consequences of the United States leading the world to deny the sanctity of life and to deny God as the author of life are still unfolding in gravely harmful ways. How many nations have moved away from laws guarding the life of the unborn in the past fifty years? How many repercussions of embracing evil continue to plague our world? How much erosion have we seen in the strong stance of the Catholic Church regarding human sexuality and the importance of moral virtue?

Some would say that the above is overstated, and they would argue that there are many other issues that need our focus. I believe, however, that as priests of Jesus Christ - priests who bring forth Our Lord in the Eucharist each time they celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; priests who offer each of the other life-giving holy sacraments on a daily basis; priests who proclaim the immutable truth of Sacred Scripture; and priests who join in the charge of every bishop to guard the Deposit of Faith, we must be men who proclaim the sanctity and dignity of every human life, and most especially, the most vulnerable among us - the lives of the unborn - as the preeminent issue of our time.

I have urged us all to be strongly Marian and strongly Eucharistic. From the hearts of men who know that the Lord of Life is with us in the Eucharist, there should flow a clear and unwavering conviction regarding the sanctity of life and the importance of strong moral virtue. Our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary spurs us on in our critical work of guarding the sanctity of life, and we must shun any attempts, even by high-ranking prelates of the Church, to downplay the importance of sexual morality.

I can understand that many would dismiss these statements as extreme, but I urge all of us who cherish our priestly call and who literally hold the Lord of Life in our hands at Mass to recognize the grave responsibility we share to denounce all the threats to life in our modern world. We find ourselves on the brink of disaster in many areas of life. Divisions in the Church grow more grave, and threats to peace, along with rumors of war, become a cacophony of evil that threatens to overwhelm us.

The voice of the Blessed Virgin Mary from scripture and from her numerous apparitions constantly echoes the same motherly theme, “Do what He tells you,” but we rebel against the voice of Christ, and we attempt to re-write God’s Word. Many voices in the world and in the Church today urge us to “abandon outdated norms and cast off a rigid morality of the past.” However, if we heed these voices, then we ignore our Blessed Mother’s urging by claiming that we have found a better path.

Brothers, we must acknowledge that the decay we are facing is rooted in the movement away from faith in God, and a movement towards a self-declaration that “we are the masters of all.” We must open our eyes to the insidious and false path of destruction that these attitudes promote.

The Roe v. Wade decision remains a watershed moment, as it was a mark of the evil that was to come. As men who are blessed to stand at the altar of Jesus Christ, and to speak His words that transubstantiate mere bread and wine into His Body and Blood, we must also be His voice in the world proclaiming the sanctity of life.

We must joyfully, vigorously, and unwaveringly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that He is the Lord of Life.

May Almighty God bless you and strengthen you as you serve Our Lord and His Church.

Bishop Joseph Strickland