

What Does Love Look Like?

My mind is spinning today as the US Supreme Court announce that the Roe v Wade decision, that legally allowed the killing of an unborn baby, has been overturned. It was a strange feeling of joy, mixed with anxiety and confusion that it will not be seen as a long-awaited victory by all within our country, or in fact within our Church. Although the Church's moral teaching is clear; The World and the members of our Church are both divided on this very crucial issue.

Those who advocate for abortion rights are not typically against babies. Most of them have children; and all of them are children. They advocate for abortion as a way for women to be able to determine their own way; and see abortion as a necessary compromise. The problem with this mindset is that it gave one class, or subset of the population a presumed right, which took away a more basic right from another class, or subset of the population.

In 1787, with a stroke of a pen, the three-fifths clause was part of a series of compromises enacted by the Constitutional Convention which for purposes of representation gave each African slave the value of three fifths of a person. In an even more unjust comparison, Native American Indians still had no representation. They did not count.

As we look back on our history, it pains me that these injustices were common and sometimes had little or no debate. People may have disagreed, but it was to the advantage of those in who were valued and represented, to keep things as they were. But eventually the voice of truth must prevail. And that voice, even if it is spoken softly, is a powerful voice.

The Supreme Court acted on behalf of the country, not on behalf of a particular ideology, when the Reconstruction Amendments (the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments, giving freedom, citizenship and the right to vote respectively) were ratified. It restored the legitimate rights that were denied to a particular group of people. (African-Americans) The timeline was painfully slow for those who fought for the dignity of blacks. Eighty-two years from the time of the time

of the Three-fifths compromise. Much longer since the time the people were reduced to the identity of slaves.

The Church teaches that every person has a dignity that has been given to them by God. And because of that dignity, each person has infinite value in the eyes of God. And because of the love that God has for them, they are to be loved by all God's children. (and those who should be)

So where do we go from here? Continue to pray that goodness, truth and beauty grow and flourish in our country and in our Church. Recognize that the Supreme Court decision of today is a new beginning. It restored the right to life (on the federal level), on paper. It does not take away our responsibility to care for all humanity, mothers and babies included. I will leave you with a few paragraphs from the bishops of Iowa addressing this issue.

...as we affirm the dignity and value of every human life, we welcome the possibility of saving countless unborn children as well as sparing women and families the pain of abortion. We exhort our nation to prioritize the well-being of women, children, and families so that no woman ever feels forced to choose between her future and the life of her child. Through its charity agencies, and the independent efforts of its members, the Catholic Church is supporting all women in addition to the child in the womb. We accompany women and couples who are facing unexpected or difficult pregnancies, and during the early years of parenthood, through initiatives such as Walking with Moms in Need.

As we look forward to next weekend's festivities of celebrating our freedom as a country, we recall freedom is not so that we can do what we want. It is so that we can do what we ought.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Fr. Jeff", with a large, stylized flourish underneath.

Fr. Jeff Belger, Priest Director