

Reflections

by the
Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy



January 22nd – A Tragic Anniversary

Next Sunday, we recall the 11th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision which overturned the abortion laws of all fifty states. This decision legalized abortion in our country. It violated a basic Christian principle of "the right to life" and denied that the child in the womb is a human being.

As we recall this Supreme Court decision next weekend, it would be an appropriate time for prayer, penance and determined efforts by all people for the support of life from the moment of conception to the moment of death. It would also be good at this time to recall the teaching of the Church on this issue especially as it has been expressed by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II.

Pope John Paul II has made the following points:

- Whoever attempts to destroy human life in the womb of the mother not only violates God's law but also attacks society by undermining respect for all human life.
- If a person's right to life is violated at the moment in which he or she is first conceived, an individual blow is struck at the whole moral order which serves to ensure the inviolate goods of all people, among which life occupies the first place.
- Human life is the basis of human dignity and human rights. If it can be arbitrarily destroyed in the womb of the mother, it will be difficult to establish compelling safeguards at other times and in other circumstances.
- Catholics have a responsibility to oppose laws that violate the right to life and to promote laws that safeguard and protect respect for human life from conception on.

The liberalization of abortion laws in many nations has resulted not only in an increase in the number of abortions performed each year, but correspondingly, in a depredation of the value of human life. A principal role of the family is the life-giving, life-nurturing role. Permissive abortion is a denial or frustration of many of the central values and roles of the family and its members. In establishing permissive abortion laws to achieve social goals - the limitation of population growth, the reduction of poverty, genetic disorders or unplanned pregnancies - the state substitutes its own policies for the compassion, mutual assistance, support and human love on which family life is based. These points were emphasized by the late Cardinal Cooke when he reflected on the impact of abortion on marriage, the family and society.

Next weekend when we come together to share the gift of life which Jesus offers in the Eucharist, I ask your prayers in a special way for a change of heart for those who promote abortion in our country and world today; I ask for your support to seek ways in which we might work for effective means to protect the right to life from the moment of conception to the moment of death. The right to life is an issue which does not allow complacency.

Request for Prayers: Please remember the priests of the Diocese who will be participating in a Priests' Retreat this week at the Ursuline Center in Great Falls under the direction of Reverend George Maloney, S.J.