

This past Wednesday, January 22nd was the anniversary of the so-called Roe vs. Wade decision of the Supreme Court legalizing abortion in the United States. The Church has declared January 22nd to be a “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children” in every diocese in the U.S. The memorial for St Vincent has even been perpetually moved, in the U.S., to January 23, so that special Masses can be offered that day. All of this is to say that the Church takes the legalization of abortion *very* seriously, as very grave matter.

Before going on, it always has to be emphasized that the Mercy of God is always available regardless of what sin a person has committed. It’s imperative to remember this because if the Lord does give someone who has supported or participated in abortion the grace of repentance, it would be too much bear if they did not know that He stands there ready, even eager you might say, to pardon and be reconciled. There is generally reparation yet to do even after reconciliation but regardless of that, with one good, humble, sincere Confession you can be reconciled to God. So if you have been directly involved in abortion and you are truly sorry for it, don’t hesitate – go and relieve yourself in Confession as soon as you can. I suspect every priest has some experience with this in Confession so you won’t likely be the first one he has heard.

It is perhaps worthwhile to start a discussion on this topic with the question of: is it right for the Church to speak on the matter of abortion? The reason this question arises in people’s minds is because today’s climate builds the impression that abortion is (just) a political issue. It is not. Abortion is not, *not*, first and foremost a political matter or a matter of opinion or personal preference. It is first and foremost a serious moral issue. God Himself has something to say about it. Thus, it is the Church’s duty – not right but duty – to speak on this matter. It is, and has been from the beginning, a definitive teaching – God’s clearly expressed will – that abortion is wrong, a very grave matter. As noted in the bulletin item on Amendment G, this was manifested in the very early Church, even in the first generation. St Barnabas, for example (the companion of St Paul), stated in one of his letters: “Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion, nor again shalt thou kill it when it is born.”

Abortion is the killing of innocent human life. It might be asked, though, if every wrong or immoral act, or simply every sin, has to be or should be civilly illegal. Of course the answer is no. In fact, such a thing would be impossible – everyone would be in jail every day; it’s neither necessary nor possible to make every sin a civil crime. However, some things are such a grave offense against both God and man, and such a detriment to society, that they need to be made illegal. Abortion is certainly one such offense. Legalized abortion affects everyone, whether or not you have been directly involved in one and even if you are pro-life, which I suspect most everyone in this pastorate is. It affects people’s thinking and beliefs. For one thing, there is a strong tendency to think that if something is legal, it must not be all that bad, which is reinforced when it becomes more and more widespread. If abortion had been illegal your whole life and if you had never heard much about it and then it came out in the news that someone was killing unborn children, you would be appalled and outraged. But now that it has been legal for so long and become rather frequent, that appall and outrage has been largely dimmed in probably the majority of people; and, after a while, people just get worn out with outrage. This leads to a second effect of legalized abortion. If even the killing of innocent children no longer appalls a person then what will? Legalized abortion has desensitized people to grave evil and thus flung the door wide open to acceptance of more and more immorality; the flood ensues until finally almost anything goes. It affects young people as well; having now grown up with legalized abortion it is likely harder for most of them to see it as the grave evil it is. Finally, without question the heart becomes severely hardened. As just one example of this, a mother sued a hospital a couple of years ago because they did not diagnose her child with Down’s Syndrome prior to birth; if they had, she said, she would have certainly aborted this hardship. To be able to look at your own child and say: I would’ve killed you if I had known, is the epitome of hard-heartedness. Yes, legalized abortion affects everyone. A 2012 article in the so-called International Journal of Medical Ethics is another illustration of the downward slide into inhumanity that happens when something as brutal as abortion is popularized. This article argued that infanticide, killing babies after they are born, is moral (ok) and should be legal, given that abortion is legal. If you were told about how a Roman father, during Apostolic times, could look at his newborn child after birth and decide whether or not to drown the child, would

you be appalled and call such a practice barbaric? If so, then why is that not true now? If someone doesn't call that barbaric, then they have become barbaric themselves.

The essence of hell is: me, my will be done, what I want and when I want it, no laying down myself or enduring hardship for the sake of the other – extreme self-interest and entitlement. It is not hard to see that this mentality, which is anti-Christ, is now pervasive in our country today. It is easily seen in everyday life and conversations. This should not be surprising. The legalization of abortion is an extreme manifestation of this mentality. Popular culture is teaching people that this is how you should be.

For those who have grown up with legalized abortion and have been bombarded by all of the rhetoric – especially in the media, including the entertainment industry – there is perhaps the nagging question in the back of their mind as to how could it be wrong if “everybody” says otherwise? If “all” of the “authorities” – media and many politicians – say it's good and surround it with such a sanctimonious aura of righteousness, could all of that really be wrong? Popular opinion is a compelling force – too compelling – for many people, especially young people. So what to say about that? Well, how did this “popular” opinion come about? The plotting and scheming that brings about such things often remains hidden or lies only in the realm of rumors and speculation. That is not the case for abortion. Dr Bernard Nathanson explained it clearly. Nathanson was an avowed atheist, abortionist (he performed 1000's of abortions), and a founding member of NARAL – the National Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Laws (laws prohibiting abortion). However, ultrasound came out and he watched an abortion being performed through ultrasound. When he saw this he dropped his tools of death, rejected abortion, and actually became Catholic. He then explained the tactics that were used to sell abortion in the U.S. His full account can be read here: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resources/abortion/articles-and-addresses/an-ex-abortionist-speaks>. Briefly, Nathanson outlined these key tactics. One was to “capture the media.” One tactic to do this was to “fabricate the results of fictional polls,” announcing, for example, that their polls showed that a majority of Americans favored legalized abortion, when in fact they didn't take any polls at all. The second tactic, he said, was to “play the Catholic card,” making the Church the enemy. Finally, Nathanson said, a 3rd tactic was to cover up any evidence that life begins at conception. So this is how this popular opinion came about – through lies, deception, and intentional manipulation, based on a handful of people's desire for their own agenda. Is this something to put stock in? Dr Nathanson went on to say that the support of doctors for abortion amounted to simple arithmetic: \$300/abortion, times 1.55 million abortions/yr = \$500,000,000 of revenue annually, and that was years ago. Look twice before accepting popular opinion, look behind what generated it, how it was intentionally created by a handful of people acting out of self-interest.

The role of the laity in building up the Kingdom of God is, as the Church says, to take the faith out into the world, into everyday life. We cannot think that we're done with this. Those with this agenda will keep pushing. I would like to encourage everyone, then, to become actively pro-life in some way. How? Prayer is always primary. Ask our Lord to remove evil from our country, from our minds. Laws are good but not enough. Conversion is needed. I never thought I would live to see the overturning of Roe v Wade. This was certainly the work of brave and honest jurists but it was first and foremost the action of our Lord. There are numerous possibilities for other tangible works, following prayer. The proliferation of the “No on G” signs that was so well supported in this pastorate, is a good example. One thing I would really encourage you to do is support legislators – both state and federal – who support pro-life work and laws. I was recently told about a SD state legislator that has worked hard in this area, and he has received an abundance of hate mail and even death threats because of his pro-life work. This needs to be countered. Support them with letters of thanks and encouragement. Support your local and/or national Right to Life groups. The diocese takes a bus to the National March for Life in D.C. each year. There are also pro-life rallies at the state level every year. Be prepared to talk others about this, to speak for what is right. Dr. Nathanson made a documentary called “The Silent Scream.” Get some friends together and watch this, or some other pro-life material, and use it generate talk amongst yourselves. It is worth your while. Abortion deteriorates minds and robs people of eternal life.

God bless you, Fr Kuhn.