

14 Sunday C

July 3, 2022

St. Patrick

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The chosen people are returning to their beloved Jerusalem from their long exile faraway. What a tender image the Scriptures give! A mother nursing her newborn child, rocking the baby on her knees; then, the promise, **“Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her....As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”**

Friends: I cannot remember having a harder time with a Sunday homily as I have had with this one. I have chosen to preach in light of the overturning of Roe v. Wade. I would much rather by-pass it.

A couple learned that the wife is pregnant, and they are overjoyed. Her physician then has her undergo many more tests, ultimately telling the couple that she is pregnant with triplets. Then the specialist advises the couple that, from the test results and because the body of the wife is small, they should abort fetus C, in order to give fetuses A and B a real chance of survival.

The couple was shocked. Clearly they were so happy about the pregnancy, but they were taken back about the specialist’s counsel to abort one of the three, to better ensure the safe birth of the other two, and the mother’s health.

They talked it over with the hospital chaplain. They prayed fervently. Finally, *they* decided to keep all three in uterus, hoping for their—and the mother’s—safety.

A Middle Eastern couple, recent immigrants to America from their home country of Egypt, they waited throughout the pregnancy with hope mixed with worry. On the day of the safe birth of all three children, and the health of the mother, the father danced with elation in the delivery room.

The parents have given me permission to share their story. I baptized the triplets, gave them their First Communion, and sat next to the parents for their high school graduation. This family has brought me great joy.

Clearly, these parents of triplets made a pro-life choice. But what if it had turned out otherwise? What if the mother, and all three of the babies, had died in the latter part of their pregnancy? Or, at the beginning of the pregnancy, what if the

mother had chosen to abort fetus C, in order to give fetus A and fetus B a real chance of birth and health? Would you say that each of those choices would be pro-life?

I'm so grateful how things did turn out. Still, such agonizing options had to be sifted and decided! The mother, with her husband, ultimately ought to make that decision. In many other pregnancies, there are also scenarios, excruciatingly complex and painful, that demand very hard choices. Shouldn't those decisions ultimately be made by the mother? What does all this mean now since the recent Supreme Court decision?

I have been advised not to say that I am clearly against direct abortion. "Everybody knows that you are." I am thankful you do know it because, if not, it would mean that I have not ministered to you openly. In 1984, Mario Cuomo, the Catholic Governor of New York, gave a noted talk at the University of Notre Dame. Part of it bluntly indicts the Church. Listen: "Catholics, the statistics show, support the right to abortion in equal proportion to the rest of the population. Despite the teaching in our homes and schools and pulpits, despite the sermons and pleadings of parents and priests and prelates, despite all the effort at defining our opposition to...abortion, collectively we Catholics apparently believe -- and perhaps act -- little differently from those who don't share our commitment" (1). These statistics are true in our time as they were almost forty years ago.

Law has been enacted now what we have failed to persuade from the lens of faith and reason.

The dilemma of direct abortion must take into account the health and life of the mother. At the same time we are called to protect the human life of the unborn child. Indeed, "everything essential for a growing human life is present from the moment of conception. Only time and nourishment are necessary to bring that life forward" (2). Now, especially—and government must ensure it—the mother during pregnancy must be given the care we all want for our loved ones. Also, after birth the child must be assured of longtime care in all aspects, such as health, nutrition, education, and housing.

That is an essential part of our Catholic pro-life commitment.

I've heard that a large majority of St. Patrick's disagrees with the church's teaching on abortion, and that many may well leave the Catholic communion as a result. I am saddened by that. The clergy sex abuse scandal, the deep-seated

clericalism which Pope Francis keeps teaching against, and the refusal really to hear women's voices and allow them to shape the church—oh, these are reasons also to consider leaving. I hope, instead, that we stay together.

At the end of his letter to the Galatian churches, which we heard this Sunday, the Apostle Paul teaches that the only thing that matters is becoming “**a new creation**” (6:15). Led by the Spirit of the Risen Jesus, may we live as “**a new creation.**”

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- (1) Governor Mario Cuomo, “Religious Belief and Public Morality: A Catholic Governor’s Perspective, given September 13, 1984  
<https://archives.nd.edu/research/texts/cuomo.htm>.
  - (2) Quoted from Catholic Bishops of Tennessee Statement on U.S. Supreme Court Ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, on June 17, 2022

*General Intercessions*

*July 3, 2022*

*14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*

**“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few.”  
Inspire us, as church, to heed Jesus’ call and announce  
the Gospel by our sharing the Gospel and by our way of  
life; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Strengthen our nation this Independence Day weekend,  
that we might truly ensure “liberty and justice for all”;  
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Deepen our reverence for all human life, from its  
beginning to its earthly death; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Inspire your Church’s efforts to advocate for the dignity  
and loving care of all immigrants and refugees;  
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Strengthen all those who work with the homeless,  
especially homeless families at the Dorothy Day House  
of Hospitality; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Rejoin families and loved ones who are separated by  
war, civic duty, or political conflict;  
we pray to you, O Lord—**

