

082408 21st Sunday in OT Pro Life Weekend 1

“God created man.... in the Divine image he created him. Male and female, he created them.” These words are from God’s divinely inspired and most holy Scripture – Genesis, chapter 1. Dear friends... there are leaders of the early Church called the Fathers of the Church... and many great teachers from the middle ages – and current day theologians, philosophers and biblical scholars like Scott Hahn. These leaders and educators tell us that during the Mass, at the prayer which begins when Father extends his hands over the ordinary bread and wine and he invokes the Holy Spirit – a staggering event happens. Time and space and ordinary worldly rules are suspended. We can’t see it physically, but the veil that separates us from the divine is opened. In a special way, we are privileged to join the entire heavenly court. To learn more, you can read the book by Scott Hahn *The Lamb’s Supper*.

During the Eucharistic prayers of the Mass, we are given the opportunity to be in the presence of Almighty God... we are with the entire heavenly court. All the angels and saints are here. These heavenly bodies do not occupy physical space – so thousands... millions can exist in this space. And they bow down in worship to the Father and to the Spirit... and they bow to the greatest miracle... the miracle of the Christ given human life by God inside the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And in this and every Mass, Jesus offers himself to the Father in a continuation of the Last Supper, his sacrifice of the cross and in the joy of His resurrection. We call this the paschal mystery.

We come to Mass – we are so used to the stand up, sit down, kneel... many of us don't enter into this mystery. We just see it as what Catholics do at Mass. Now you may wonder why I am bringing this topic to your attention. The answer is that at least one of my family members will be here when the opening of the veil takes place at this Mass. The family member is a young infant who died shortly after her premature birth. She was born after just six months in the womb, and her name is Maggie Lynn. I've had a love affair with Maggie Lynn and I've prayed for and to her these years. I think Maggie and I are especially close. And it is interesting to share this with you, her parents, my daughter and her husband aren't Catholic. But Maggie Lynn was born in an emergency situation at St. Joseph Hospital in Phoenix – and a Catholic deacon that I don't even know baptized her because she was too young to survive.

My wife and I have four children – and if you took a poll of any of us – the one of our family who most wanted to be a mother and who would be a great mom – it was our daughter Barbara. And it was our Barbara who had so much joy in this first pregnancy with Maggie. She had ultrasound pictures taken at about 10 weeks in the womb. We could see Maggie Lynn's hands and body. Those pictures were on our daughter's refrigerator and they were the beginning of us knowing that a new life had started in the womb.

Have you ever read or heard any of the beautiful words from Psalm 139? Oh Lord, you formed my inmost being.

You knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, so wonderfully you made me... how precious are your designs." Yes, God's designs are precious – sometimes resulting in a person who becomes a priest or a president or a doctor or a good plumber. And sometimes, like granddaughter Maggie Lynn, a life ends all too soon. Or a child is aborted. Why God allows this? These are questions we will take to Heaven for sure.

Do you know that at four days in the womb that doctors can tell the sex of a child? That's just four days after the marriage act of love, or what should be the marriage act takes place. At four and a half weeks, the main parts of the brain are present. Eyes, ears, nasal organs, digestive tract, liver, gall bladder, etc... they are all present. And at six weeks in the womb, they can do electrocardiograms and electroencephalograms. It is at this time that fingers and toes form. The baby is now especially susceptible to the mother's eating habits, nutritional intake, and her use of smoking, alcohol or drugs. And it is about this time that a woman who doesn't want a child is pretty much aware that she could be pregnant; she may start to consider alternatives. She may be in a panic about what to do. It may take weeks – talking with her husband or a partner or a doctor. And then, a diagnosis of pregnancy takes place. Let's say that the woman is a 9 or 10 weeks into this.... The child is now classified as a fetus. When the eyelids or the palms of the hands are touched, they respond by closing. By ten weeks, the brain is much as it will be at birth. The baby will turn its head if the forehead is touched.

I ask you... at what point did society decide that we had the choice and the permission to stop this process inside a woman's body? I ask you --- at what point did we become willing to accept that there is no moral consequence to ending life like this, reaching into God's human tabernacle -- the womb? The Bible unfailingly teaches that children are a blessing from God. And He commanded parents to be fertile and to multiply. For thousands of years, people cooperated with God in bringing forth life. Now, society says to you, to your teens or adults, or to grand children... don't worry -- life is disposable.

We have pro-choice people who raise the banner of Vatican II: "We are the Church. We ARE the Church." Do you know what Vatican II said? In the Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes*, the Second Vatican Council said in forceful fashion: "Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception. Abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes."

If you didn't know the topic of this sermon – I might ask those who loved Mother Teresa of Calcutta to raise your hands. Most would show how much her holy life and example meant. And yet, at the 1994 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D. C. – Mother Teresa stood in front of the president and those who support funding for abortion and embryonic stem cell research and contraception. Mother Teresa said that the greatest destroyer of peace in the world was abortion; she said it is the murder of a child. She said that any country that teaches that abortion is acceptable teaches that violence is the way to get what you want.

Scripture repeatedly condemns the killing of the innocent... whether flowing from the simple statement, “Thou shall not kill” in Exodus and Deuteronomy... or from Christ’s words spoken to the rich man – obey the commandments and do not kill.

Recently, I was watching a documentary. In this expose, evil men abused a teen girl. She was rescued and taken to the hospital for examinations and tests. Later, she was interviewed on TV and she said that the hospital medical staff gave her something so that if she were pregnant -- ‘it’ would be gone... “It.” Our hospitals... our medical people... helping a girl who might be pregnant to believe that what might be there is an ‘IT.’ You know what? IT is a shame we have become passive about this – accepting this IT of our leaders and our society. IT is a sin... that’s what IT is.

One of the great themes of Christ’s kingdom... one of the themes of Scripture is found in the question raised in Genesis chapter 4.... “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The sadness is 45,000,000 abortions – the sadness of those who insult intelligence by suggesting this is a political issue. These people are saying the same words that Cain uttered to God... “Am I the infant’s keeper?’ God who is a God of justice will ultimately confront us with truth. This isn’t about politics... this isn’t about whether you are forced to vote for a particular party because if you don’t then the other party will continue in power and you can’t stand that... For Heaven’s sake... for God’s sake... for life’s sake then CHANGE THE PARTY. Change what your preferred political party stands for.

We ARE our brother's keeper. Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do to me. 45,000,000 infants who have the least power, the least protection, the least voice... they depend on us to speak for them... to pray for them. These children – the pre-born depend on us to make the changes in our political system so this is no longer a factor of being forced to vote for one party or another.

We must band together – not republicans and democrats... not conservatives and liberals... we must band together as brothers and sisters of Christ in defense of the real message of Christ... the real message of Catholics... all life is sacred. And during the holiest quiet of the Consecration of this Mass, know that Mother Teresa... and John Paul II and probably my granddaughter Maggie Lynn are praying with you – praising God... and praying that we honor life in God's creation from natural beginning to natural death.

Denver, August 17 2008. The Archdiocese of Denver announced it will hold a prayer vigil and peaceful protest outside the Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains Abortion Clinic. Speaking at the event will be Dr. Alveda King, and Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput, Archbishop of Denver.

The archdiocesan Respect Life Office, in partnership with the archdiocesan Office of Black Catholics will hold the "Light in the Darkness" rally against abortion on Monday, August 25.

The main speaker of the event, Dr. Alveda King, the niece of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Director of African American Outreach for the Gospel of Life Ministries will open the prayer vigil by addressing abortion as one of today's most pressing civil rights issues. She will also comment on Planned Parenthood's history of targeting minority neighborhoods for abortion services.

Dr. King has noted that "The fight against abortion is a new frontier in the Civil Rights Movement," stated Dr. King. "We are not following Martin's dream if we do not stand up for the voiceless."

Additionally, Archbishop Chaput and Pastor Ralph Beechum of House of Joy Miracle Deliverance Church and will offer prepared remarks.

Also in attendance will be Auxiliary Bishop of Denver, Most Rev. James Conley, Pastor Patrick L. Demmer, Jr. of Graham Memorial Community Church of God in Christ and Pastor Willard Johnson of Macedonia Baptist Church in Park Hill.

The bishops of Colorado have spoken out against the new facility explaining that not only is Planned Parenthood among the leading providers of abortion in the United States, but they also are "a supplier of graphic and educational materials."

The November statement concluded by asking Catholics to offer their prayers to God for the respect of life: "We urge the Catholic community and all people of good will to defend themselves and their beliefs against Planned Parenthood by every legal and ethical means at their disposal. We ask all Catholics to pray, within their families and parish communities, that the dignity and sanctity of every human life will be upheld at all stages of development."

The vigil will conclude with a candlelight walk around new facility, which is said to be the largest abortion clinic in the United States. It is located at 7155 E. 38th Ave. in Denver.

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Reading 1
Is 22:19-23

Thus says the LORD to Shebna, master of the palace:

"I will thrust you from your office
and pull you down from your station.

On that day I will summon my servant
Eliakim, son of Hilkiah;

I will clothe him with your robe,
and gird him with your sash,

and give over to him your authority.

He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
and to the house of Judah.

I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim's shoulder;
when he opens, no one shall shut
when he shuts, no one shall open.

I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot,
to be a place of honor for his family.”

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

R. (8bc) Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

I will give thanks to your name,
because of your kindness and your truth:

When I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,
and the proud he knows from afar.

Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;

forsake not the work of your hands.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

Reading II

Rom 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!
For who has known the mind of the Lord
or who has been his counselor?
Or who has given the Lord anything
that he may be repaid?
For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen.

Gospel

Mt 16:13-20

Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and
he asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”
They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah,
still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter said in reply,
“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
Jesus said to him in reply,

“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.

And so I say to you, you are Peter,

and upon this rock I will build my church,

and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;

and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Then he strictly ordered his disciples

to tell no one that he was the Christ.