

The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica November 9, 2008

Readings: Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17; John 2:13-22

I Have a Dream

Today we celebrate the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome. This basilica was built in Rome in the 4th century by the Emperor Constantine. It marked the end of three centuries of persecution of the Church as Constantine gave Christianity legal status to exist. This basilica is considered the mother church of all Christianity and so holds a special place of honor.

The Church has had a lot of ups and downs, wins and losses, since those times. And this week has been a significant bump in the road. It has been a discouraging and disappointing week for those of us interested in reestablishing a culture of life in our state and country; and that should be all of us present in this church. Anti-abortion proposals failed in several states and an assisted suicide proposal passed in the state of Washington. Closer to home, despite the efforts of the Catholic Church, Proposal 2 which removes all restrictions on embryonic stem cell research passed by a narrow margin. What is particularly sad is that the proposal probably would not have passed without the support and endorsement of our Catholic governor who once again defied the teachings of her own Church. We can wonder what would motivate her behavior, but in the end we need to pray for her.

On the national level, we saw the historic event of the election of our first black president. Unfortunately, he is probably also the most pro-abortion president we have ever elected. He even supports partial-birth abortion and is on record as supporting the killing of babies that have survived abortion attempts; it's call infanticide. He voted three times against legislation in Illinois intended to put a stop to this practice. He has committed to signing the Freedom of Choice Act, and promised that it will be the first bill he signs into law as president. This act would undo much of the progress that has been achieved in putting restrictions on abortions and limiting government funding of abortions. It is estimated that 125,000 additional abortions will take place in our country each year if this bill is passed. We need to pray for Barack Obama that he has a conversion of heart. We need to pray and be active with our senators and representatives to stop this act from becoming law.

It was indeed an historical event, but now we have to clean up the mess; we have even more hard work cut out for us. The efforts to stop abortion will be more difficult, and so we must fight that much harder. What is particularly sad for me is that I read one statistic that 54% of people that call themselves Catholics voted for Barack Obama despite his barbaric disrespect for the lives of unborn, and even born, children. But we all have to follow our consciences, and the U.S. Bishops did say that we could vote for a pro-choice candidate for grave moral reasons. But I have to wonder how many of the 54% really had grave moral reasons for doing so.

I know of many diligent pro-life workers that were moved to tears by the events of Tuesday. When I had difficulty falling asleep that night, I simply repeated the words: *"Jesus, I trust in You. Jesus, I trust in You. Jesus, I trust in You."* It brought me some

peace. We have to have peace and move forward in the fight, accepting that we do not always understand God's will and how He works and what His plan may entail.

When we don't understand, we can relate to Jesus' disciples. Jesus said in the gospel this morning: ***"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."*** But the disciples didn't understand His words until later after His resurrection. The temple He referred to is his body. And we are all members of the Body of Christ. Paul reminds us this morning that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. He says: ***"Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy."***

Each unborn child that is aborted can also be considered a little temple of God, although they never had the opportunity to be formally made temples of the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Baptism as God intends for all of us. Let's listen to St. Paul's words again in that context: ***"If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy."*** We must all work to put an end to the destruction of God's little temples and ask for mercy on our country where this destruction occurs so frequently. I pray for God's mercy on me, because I think of all the sins of omission, all those times where I could have, and should have, done more to help fight abortion and defeat pro-abortion candidates. I commend those who worked so diligently whether it be through fasting and prayer, or protests, or making phone calls, or distributing pro-life literature. Keep up the good work. You are in my prayers; don't give up. We have a difficult road ahead.

But I would like to make a special appeal, a special call to action, however, to those that fall within the 54% of Catholics who voted for Barack Obama; those of you who voted for him because of grave moral reasons despite his pro-abortion record and promises. I encourage those of you who fall into this category to reflect and consider whether you should take a more active pro-life role. You voted your conscience, but now it may be your responsibility to help with the extra pro-life work that your decision created. There is so much to do. Will you help by offering prayers and fasting? Will you help by writing letters to our elected officials? Will you join with those who picket and pray in front of abortion clinics? Will you join those who volunteer at problem pregnancy centers to encourage pregnant women to make good choices and then support them in those decisions?

Today as we celebrate the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, we remember a time when Christians were first able to practice their beliefs publicly in the marketplace. Let us unify our Church once again and all fight together to restore our country to a culture of life. Let us use our freedom to be Christians in the marketplace and in public life to make a change in the world. Let us not be complacent and simply go with the flow. Let us work together to put an end to the pagan practice of abortion. I dream of the political clout we could have if 100% of Catholics voted against pro-abortion candidates. The pro-abortion politicians would have no choice but to listen and change their positions. And then we would have the possibility of going into the voting booth and choosing between two pro-life candidates. We could then vote based on other issues. I have a dream.

Deacon Joe Hulway