

“Choose Life” - Canon Larry Hill

Holy Trinity Cathedral - 1/17/2010

Matt. 2:13-18

We have been hearing for at least a year now that there is a health-care crisis in our land. We have been alerted, warned, pleaded with, lectured to... that if we don't do something soon... our health care system will only get worse...And more and more people will be shut out of the system and not be able to get the medical care they need for themselves and their families.

Well... to the surprise of many here this morning, I would readily agree. Our health care system is in trouble; it does need reform... and the sooner the better. But before you tune me out... or break out the tar and feathers... please hear me out.

The reason I agree with this need is NOT... listen... is NOT for any of the financial and political reasons that have been set before us. We do not need reform because we would be better off with the government running and rationing health care...We do not need reform because people without insurance cannot get medical care... The reality is, those without insurance get care all the time. Public hospitals cannot turn people away and private hospitals cannot decline to treat cases that are deemed emergencies.

We do not need reform because we might be paying more than other countries do. The old adage, “You get what you pay for,” not only applies to car care and lawn care, etc., but also to health care!

No...the reason I believe that we need health care reform is because there is a curse on the whole system. There is an affliction, a tribulation on the system because of a spiritual and moral issue.

You may remember the Lord's words to the people of Israel as they were preparing to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land...Moses said in Deuteronomy 30:19, “This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”

And if you go back a couple of chapters the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience...The curses not only include economic issues and family issues and national issues... but health issues.

Moses said, in 28:15... “If you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...” Now for all you biblical scholars, I fully realize that these curses and blessings were specific to Israel... specific to God's covenant people. But, that doesn't mean we can ignore these words with impunity...It does not mean that we can disobey God's words and commands and still expect His blessing.

We too need to be choosing life... by choosing to be faithful to God's Word... by choosing to obey. I believe that as a nation and as a culture, we have made some choices, that have some damning consequences... including a curse on our health care system. In particular, a choice which is the precise opposite of the oath, the vow that doctors take... a vow to do no harm.

It is the choice of the very enemy which the Lord came to destroy...It is the choice of the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations as it says. It is the choice of the curse that has been upon mankind since the fall...It is the choice of curse of death... in particular the death of children... the least of these... the choice if legalized abortion.

It is hard to imagine God blessing a health care system that includes the deliberate support and legal protection of such a choice.

Today, as you know, is Sanctity of Life Sunday...And last year when I preached on this subject... (I'm sure you all remember all that I said)... last year I focused on the personal suffering that results from choosing death over life... from choosing abortion. I talked about the physical and psychological and spiritual trauma that is suffered... and the compassion that we need to have as Christians in ministering to those who have made this choice.

Today, I want to take a different track...I don't want to talk about the personal issues but the societal and cultural ones...Because this is not just a personal matter... it is one that affects every one of us...

Please turn with me in your bibles to Matthew 2...Why did Herod slaughter these innocents? What was it that drove him to such a despicable act and indescribable horror?

Well, I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to figure the answer out... it is a rather obvious answer, is it not? This was not a national security action...This was not a matter of national defense...This was not a criminal justice issue... I mean... come on...these were infants that were slaughtered at Herod's command.

We know why he did this! His action in Bethlehem was nothing more and nothing less than a grasp at power... an attempt to hold on to power. My friends, governments and politicians can claim all they want to about freedom and human rights, etc....They can claim that they are standing on principle to protect a woman's health...But quite frankly such claims are about as phony as a three dollar bill.

How do I know... well, let me put it another way... if there was a clear majority opposed to abortion in this country, politicians would fall in line. Out of political self-preservation, they would be trumpeting a different tune. I know that sounds cynical, but have you ever really listened to what politicians say about abortion? "I am personally against it, but publically I am for choice." Why would a politician say something like that? It's an attempt to play both ends against the middle, is it not? There's no principle in that!

And then there is this line you often hear: "I am committed to keeping abortion safe and legal but rare." Have you ever analyzed that comment? If there is nothing inherently wrong with abortion...

if it is morally justifiable... then please explain why in the world it needs to be rare? Could it be that you aren't really convinced that this is an innocuous procedure like that of removing an unsightly mole? Could it be that you have some doubts as to whether you are messing with a human being, a person... and not just a piece of tissue? Please tell me, Mr. Politician, why it needs to be rare?

Again, I think on any rational and fair assessment such a statement is offered as an attempt to play both ends to the middle... and thus, an attempt to hold on to power.

And it isn't just their statements that belie their real motives but also the laws they craft... that again play both ends against the middle. Laws that are not based on the objective reality of biology and theology which both, (though in different ways) make it clear that what is conceived is human, not dog or cat or plant... Instead, laws that are written based on a subjective decision... a subjective determination... 'I want this child... I don't want this child.' If the child is wanted then the laws treat the fetus as a human being with all the criminal penalties attached, if the child should be harmed in some manner. If the child isn't wanted, then somehow it isn't human... it isn't protected by the constitution... it isn't protected by the doctors' oath and vow to do no harm. No, instead, in gruesome fashion a doctor can, with the full backing and power of our government, snuff out the life of that child. Again, I ask, Mr. Politician, where's the principle in that? Where's the principle in allowing a subjective decision to determine objective reality?

You see, when you boil the issue down, so to speak, there is really only one conclusion that can be reached... it's all about power, just as with Herod. As the Archbishop of Valencia (Carlos Osoro) recently said, Abortion "is the worst dictatorship (abuse of power) that can exist and the greatest injustice in history because it ends the lives of the weakest."

I said earlier that this is not just a personal issue... It is not just a decision between a woman, her doctor, and God. It has far reaching ramifications that affect our society and lives... not the least of which is our health care system. Let me just give you a sampling of what I mean...

Abortion, as Judge Bork once said, "has coarsened us." It teaches us that life is cheap and disposable... It has fed the sex-without-consequences life-style that has resulted in a multitude of problems. STDs... a rise in premature births and cerebral palsy due to premature birth... which is due to weakened wombs damaged by abortion... A rise in infertility due to scarring by abortion... A rise in deaths to women due to abortion... A dramatic rise in single-motherhood and fatherless households. Did you know that in 1960 80% of Black children were born in households with a mother and a father... Today 80% of Black children are born to a single mom. That's not a criticism of Blacks... that's a statement of how much they have suffered because of reproduction rates are so far below replacement level, thanks to abortion... Russia is begging women to have children, where abortion is the primary form of birth control and women commonly have a couple of dozen abortions during their lifetimes.

The abortion issue is but one battle-front in a spiritual war between of two entirely different world-views. One that recognizes the dignity and value and sanctity of life of each and every human

being...And one that places just a relative value on human life based on its capacity to survive, make decisions, or somehow contribute to society.

The former world-view is based in the teaching of Scripture and the doctrines of creation and redemption... and speaks to our incredible worth and value to God. The latter world-view says that human beings are simply part of the material fabric of this world, no different in value from other species... and thus they can be used, manipulated, and disposed of according to utilitarian needs... a power play, in other words.

Dr. Peter Singer, a professor at Princeton University is one of the leading proponents of this utilitarian world-view... and proclaims that a healthy pig has more value than a retarded child. He also believes and teaches that it is okay to take the life of infants. He says, "Killing a newborn baby is never equivalent to killing a person, that is, a being who wants to go on living..." An infant lacks "rationality, autonomy and self-consciousness."

His disciple is a man named Cass Sunstein, who is the White House regulatory czar... and he had this to say, "A full-grown horse or dog is, beyond comparison, a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month." BTW, this brilliant czar wants animals to have the right to sue us.

John Holdren, the White House science czar, has advocated forced abortions and sterilization... He says, people who "contribute to social deterioration" (undesirables, in other words) "can be required by law to exercise reproductive responsibility" (meaning abortion or sterilization).

As you can well imagine, this war of world-views has absolutely frightening implications for our society and world... and yes, even our health care system.

The moment you move from a principle of the sanctity of life for all human beings to one of relative and utilitarian value...you open the door to the Herod's of the world...You open the door to such things as "comparative effectiveness" in health care... which is a euphemism for health care rationing. You open the door to young people being valued more than the elderly when it comes to health care... as Mr. Sunstein indicated in one of his papers. You open the door to the powerful to decide who gets care and who doesn't... who lives and who doesn't.

Can we even begin to measure the costs of the cycle of poverty, single motherhood, and fatherless kids upon our society? We can add to that the whole misunderstanding of love and commitment and marriage... and the costs of that to our culture. It is mind-boggling to say the least, the curse that has been unleashed in our land and in the world.

Europe, if the current trends continue, in just a few decades will be dominated by Muslims... Why? Because European Abortion is but one battle-front in this larger war. It is a war that humanity cannot afford to lose.

Of course, it is not just the politicians and judges that have engaged in this horrific abuse of power. The proponents of abortion on demand have done likewise.

I will never forget attending the March for Life in 1992... It was the last time, I can recall, that counter protestors lined Constitution Ave. creating the atmosphere of marching through a gauntlet.

I have only felt the palpable presence of evil a few times in my life... and that was one of them. The filth coming out of the mouths of those we had to walk through was unbelievable. Things were said, and posters shoved in our faces said things that were unimaginable. I cannot repeat them here... but in one case the Blessed Mother was described in terms that would make the saltiest sailor blush... that's how bad it was.

If there was one theme to their foul comments it was this...“This is my body... This is my body.” Think about that phrase... Abortion supporters use it over and over... as a way to express their demand for power. Michelle Goldberg, in her article “Rant for Choice,” put it this way... “I say their (pro-lifers) God is worth nothing compared to my body.”

This morning... at that altar... in the presence and authority of Jesus Christ, I will say those same words, but not as an expression of power, but of love.

As Fr. Frank Pavone has written, “This is my body.” Same words, different results.” “Christ gives His body away so others might live...” “Abortion supporters cling to their own bodies so others might die.”

Jesus gave Himself... He died to defeat death and the powers thereof... He did so that we might have life. And He call us, therefore, to CHOOSE LIFE.