

Mass for the Legal Protection of the Unborn Child
1/22/14
Wednesday, Second Week of the Year

“Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?” (Mk. 3.4)

Jesus’ probing question still cuts to the heart. Like a two-edged sword the words of the Lord cuts through the prejudice and the pretense to propose two fundamental human ambitions: “to do good” and “to save life”. The question was already an answer. It was not an appeal to the law. It was a reminder of what purpose Mosaic law as well as all law, no matter its origin, must serve: “to do good” and “to save life”.

There are few today who will argue the good of an abortion. Any reflection on its grisly details will quickly silence most considerations. The common approach is to say that the law makes it right, makes it good. The assumption being what is legal must be good. Jesus turns this logic around to say instead “to do good” and “to save life” is what must be lawful. Doing good and saving life is the law’s first obligation. Even in the libertarian mindset of the prevalent judicial prudence, the exercise of freedom is still at the service of doing what is good and saving life. What does freedom mean if does evil or destroys life? What good is a law that would allow this?

We remember today the sad anniversary of the Supreme Court decision – Roe v. Wade – that legalized the sin of abortion in this country 41 years ago. Through the course of those 41 years countless young lives have been lost and millions of women have suffered the scourge of that unnecessary affliction. Just this past year, the California legislature could not agree on the scope of medical services nurses could provide to needy families but they pushed through a bill allowing nurse practitioners and midwives to do certain kinds of abortion. That is not the kind of health care women and families need. Health care decisions should not be based on fear and desperation. They should be based on the dignity of women and children as well as the hope of finding the fullness of life.

As the followers of Jesus we should oppose the practice of abortion but that is not enough. Following Jesus and with his spirit, we must do the good that inspires others to know the wisdom and mercy of Jesus so that they can turn from sin with the hope of finding the fullness of life. So many women and families turn to abortion because of the blight of poverty and the despairing lack of education. They have no hope and so make hopeless and desperate decisions. The true disciple of Jesus brings understanding where there is fear. The disciple brings hope where there is despair. The follower of Christ brings mercy

where there is shame. The good disciple brings the same Spirit one has received in baptism to those who are lost in the sadness of sin. The faithful disciple brings the joy of Jesus. This is what takes away the sins of the World by doing good and saving lives.

The gospel tells us that Jesus felt anger as well as a deep sadness for the hardness of hearts that stood silent before him. From neither of these very human emotions did the Lord choose to act. Rather, with divine heartfelt compassion, he did good and he gave life. At the healing invitation of Jesus, the man stretched out what was once a withered hand. All, then, could see with amazement that he was cured. Those gathered against the Lord were not persuaded but with time and the repeated imitation of the Lord's mercy and charity by generations of faithful disciples many have come to see and believe in the good that can be done and the many lives that can be saved.

As he has done so we must do, trusting that the good that we do will come to light and the healing life of Jesus will save us all.