

Bishop Jaime Soto – Homily for Sunday,
January 22, 2010

A day of penance for violations of the dignity of the human person and prayer for the full restoration of the right to life

Observation of the anniversary of Roe V. Wade

Between David and Saul existed a state of war. David and his followers fled from the jealous rage of King Saul and his army. Today's reading recounts one of a couple of moments in this ugly rivalry when David showed a surprising reverence for the life of his adversary. David and his men were hiding in cave, hiding because of their dreadful fear of Saul's hostile intentions. Unaware of David's whereabouts, Saul wandered alone into this same cave. This would seem to be fortunate moment for David, to end the life of Saul and emerge victorious as the next king of Israel. David does not take advantage of this moment even when he could have acted in self-defense. His followers are stunned when David protects Saul. David sees beyond Saul's threatening intentions to recognize his enemy's dignity as God's anointed one. His noble gesture not only respects the life of Saul. He acknowledges God's gaze. Even though he is hidden in the darkness of a cave, even though his actions were hidden from Saul and his army, David is keenly aware that God knows his heart and will judge his actions.

What David does is unseen by his rivals but it is seen and admired by his God. David's unwavering reverence for Saul comes to light after Saul has left the cave and David later emerges to demonstrate to Saul with what great loving regard he has spared his life. This revelation moves the bitter heart of Saul to weep. He weeps with remorse for his own hatred. He weeps because he acknowledges that David has reciprocated Saul's angry jealousy with a generous, caring love.

We gather here to observe the woeful 37th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision Roe v. Wade. The misguided logic of the court proposed to uphold human dignity by ignoring the precious dignity of unborn life. It denied the social character of the human person by ignoring the most fundamental personal relationship that claims justice and mutual respect, the relationship between a child and mother. In the very act of conception a person is created and is so created in relationship. From the very moment of conception a social relationship is established that bestows on both the child and the mother dignity and respect. The Court's contrived delusion to protect the right of one against the other, destroyed not only one life. The decision deplored both and distorted the true nature of all of human life. The law failed in its most essential purpose to protect the dignity of the human person in all social relationships, but more particularly in the most vulnerable. The obscurity of womb, like the darkness of the cave where David and Saul met, removes neither the eternal gaze of God nor the rightful gaze of the law. The devious notion that one's dignity requires severing the relationship with another, though weak and voiceless, has become a flawed paradigm for a tattered social fabric. For this reason, the relationship of mother and child torn asunder by Roe v. Wade must be restored. For this reason we should carefully consider how to restore and renew the virtue of solidarity with those who are often lost or ignored on the margins of society.

David's unselfish regard for his adversary not only saved Saul. It ennobled David. The bold, benevolent gesture of David further prepared him to be a good king, the one who by such regard for human life would bring peace and justice to the kingdom of Israel. Saul, himself, reluctantly acknowledged the royal quality of David's kindness. The eventual reign of King David, founded on this extraordinary human virtue, would be sung in

the psalms until the Lord Jesus, recognized as the Son of David, would come to bring this kingdom of justice and peace to all.

In the Gospel today, Jesus calls together his disciples, those who would follow him to building up the kingdom of kingdom of truth and life, the kingdom of holiness and grace, the kingdom of justice, love, and peace. As in David's time, Jesus chose to build up the kingdom by reverential love and respectful regard for each person, especially the poor and the weak. He saved humanity by choosing to be in relationship with each one, even those who would later threaten him with the cross. He called his disciples to do the same: "As I have done so you must do." The call of Jesus to join in this social mission continues. He calls each of us personally. He calls each of us to do the work of the kingdom with reverence and love for each person. We are saved by the Lord Jesus' personal relationship to us. We save others as well as ourselves by bringing his reverence and generosity to our relationship with one another.

As we gather around the altar of God the Lord Jesus reconciles us to himself and with one another. His love gives us the boldness to speak for the dignity of the unborn and sanctity of our relationship to them and to every human person. Like David, we recognize that we are not condemned to live as adversaries. One's right is not the rival of another's. Under the gaze of God we share a common dignity and we are all ennobled when we build that kingdom of truth and life where the fabric of mutual reverence and respect embraces all of God's children.