

Observance of the Roe v. Wade Decision
1/22/15
Thursday of the Second Week of the Year

During the State of the Union address last Tuesday, the President made the following remark: “We still may not agree on a woman’s right to choose, but surely, we can agree it’s a good thing that teen pregnancies and abortions are nearing all-time lows, and that every woman should have access to the health care that she needs.”

The president is right on three counts: The nation is still vigorously divided about the practice of abortion. Every woman should have the health care she needs. To claim that it is a good thing that teen pregnancies and abortions are nearing all-times lows is a tacit acknowledgement that neither of these – teenage pregnancies or abortions – is good. We can agree with those statements but our reasons for agreeing with this statement are markedly different. That difference is vital to the welfare of women and children and offers an option more worthy of this great nation.

The prevailing politics of sexuality stubbornly separates the sexual act from the procreative act to the detriment of a more authentic sexual expression as well as the detriment of the human person, especially women. The reduction of sexuality to

preferential recreation has had taken a terrible toll on the development of young people, especially young women. The absence of any moral sense has left a vacuum filled by pornography and the pornographic culture it fosters. This has become the default sexual education for young people. Young women have suffered most from the exploitive standards it inculcates. There are many things wrong with pornography, but its most egregious harm is the promotion of cultural norms that reduce women to sexual objects.

The violence against women, especially adolescent and young adult women, creates the distorted logic of abortion as a way of defending herself, protecting herself. But the young child in her womb is not the perpetrator. Nor is the fetus a threat.

The health care that a woman needs, the health care that a woman deserves, is one which promotes a sense of self-worth and dignity as a human person worthy of relationships where she is loved and able to love. Good sexual health for both men as well as women requires understanding sexuality as an expression of love and life. The sexual act is intended as an expression of a committed love and a committed life. Health care, good health care, will promote this moral vision for the sake of women and their children.

The inclusion of abortion as part of health care is a capitulation to a culture that continues to demean women. The many sad, sorrowful stories of post-traumatic syndrome for women who have undergone abortion further underlines that women are neither helped nor saved by this practice. It only perpetuates their plight.

Good education, good health care, good jobs and accessible child care are all resources that families need. This does require that society and governments should be willing to invest in families and young people so that their decisions are based on hope and not despair. Unfortunately, that is not what happens. The state of California would rather fund abortions in order to save on the costs of supporting women and their families.

The first reading today reminds us that Jesus, the high priest of the New Covenant, lives forever to make intercession for us. His intercession went to the extreme of offering himself as an intercession that we might have life. All of us share in this same priesthood, our baptismal priesthood. We too can live to make intercession together with Christ who offers himself on this altar. With Christ we make that intercession for ourselves, for women and their children, especially for those women expecting a child who feel lost and alone. We can make intercession for our nation and its leaders. May our intercession also include our resolve to

make sacrifices, so that others may live. God will hear us. May our efforts also be seen as a sign of hope that this great nation can still offer life, liberty and justice for all.