

## HOMILY

### *The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time* *January 18, 2009*

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**Davison, Michigan**

The other day I heard a story about a preacher who was visiting some friends. They had an old dog named Pete. Pete was in sad shape. He tottered about, had a raw spot on his back, and arthritis in his joints. The reverend asked his friends, "Why don't you have Pete put to sleep?" "Oh, no," they said, "Pete is Mike's dog." Mike was their son who was away at college. "If we put old Pete to sleep, what would we say when Mike came home and looked for his beloved dog? We couldn't bear to say to him, 'Oh, we put him to sleep because he was such a bother and he wasn't worth saving.'"

"Not worth saving." That was the label that the preacher could hang on old Pete, but not the parents because of their love for Mike and Mike's love for old Pete.

Can't you imagine some cynical angel looking down on the world and saying, "I don't see why God keeps those mangy humans around. Look how they disobey. Look how wretched most of them are. Why doesn't He just wipe them out? They are not worth saving!"

But no cynical angel could ever look at the nail prints in Jesus' hands and feet and then say of us, "They are not worth saving." Our value is beyond computing, not because of any virtue on our part, but because we are enormously loved by the God who made us in his image.

Every person has a price tag that is worth more than the national debt: God's gift of life. This is the core of everything the Bible says about life. Life is precious...not because of anything we have done, but because life is a gift from God. It doesn't matter who you are, what you look like, or what station you are born in to this world; you are sacred, your life has dignity and worth because it is a gift from God.

This basic biblical truth is full of meaning and full of controversy. Pick up any newspaper these days and you will see what I mean. I remember one gripping story in Wisconsin not too long ago where a young girl and her boyfriend delivered a baby in the back of their truck; then they put the baby into a plastic bag and suffocated her. They were later quoted as saying it was better for one little person to suffer now than for several people to suffer later the burden of an unwanted child.

You have to feel pity for these two young people. They felt they couldn't go to their parents for help. They panicked when the baby was born. But the judge sent them to jail. What they did was murder, just as it is murder when someone is shot down in the streets. You see, it doesn't matter whether the victim is 60 years old or six minutes old. All life is sacred because life is a gift from God. This is basic to the whole Christian ethic: *THOU SHALT NOT KILL*.

As gut-wrenching as that true story is, it may be even more horrifying to consider this: If they had killed their baby just weeks earlier with an abortion, it would have been legal. Think about that for a minute. These two young people went to jail because they waited too long to kill their baby. But since 1973, to terminate life within the womb is perfectly acceptable. Abortion has become a fact and a way of life, both around the world and in the U.S. In America, 1,600,000 babies are aborted each year. That's 4,383 every day, 183 within this hour of worship, 3 every minute.

Contrary to what we hear and are told by the media, only 7% of abortions are due to what we call "hard cases." The mother's health accounts for 3% of abortion, the baby's health accounts for 3%, rape or incest account for 1%. In other words, 93% of all abortions are for purely social reasons.

The reason I bring this to us is that in addition to being inauguration week, this Thursday is the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the infamous Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision that allows abortion in our land. Over 20 youth from our parish will be in Washington to be a voice for the unborn.

In our 36-year struggle, we have had some successes, and I thank so many of you for your tireless efforts. We need to do more than just label things right or wrong. We must offer more support systems, homes for unwed mothers, financial and

counseling services and assistance with adoption. We must help women see that there is a better option than abortion for unacceptable or unwanted pregnancies. I encourage you to once again participate in the Baby Bottle Campaign to provide these alternatives in our area.

But a new danger looms. There is a strong possibility that the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) may be re-introduced or voted on in the new Congress. This allows the person to make the choice, not even recognizing that, though they are still within the womb, there is another person to consider. Though action on FOCA may never materialize, there is a great possibility that the combination of the first 100 days of the new administration and the poor economy will create an environment in which drastic measures are less questioned during drastic times. The Freedom of Choice Act could also be re-introduced under a different name or accomplished in a series of smaller efforts.

Those who support FOCA would like us to be anything but prepared. In the next several weeks, we invite you to send postcards to our elected leaders in Washington and not be a “silent majority.”

On a final note, this Thursday is also a day of penance and reparation. I invite you to make this day filled with prayer and sacrifice. After all, isn't the most precious gift of all, life within the womb, worth saving?

