

Homily for the 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Most of you probably know that this past Friday, from here at IHM, a bus full of people – some 56 of us – went down to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. I've seen a lot in the 14 years I've been attending the March for Life. Usually, there are tons of people – and by tons, I mean hundreds of thousands – so many of them young people. There are always so many Catholics, other Christians, and people of other religions and even no religion participating. There's always a lot of zeal as we begin the March leaving the grounds of the Washington Monument and walking the 2 miles to the Supreme Court – the site of the 1973 ruling that legalized abortion in our country. But the number that catches me off guard the most is the nearly 60 million babies who have been legally killed in their mothers' wombs these past 44 years – 4 ½ times the population of the entire state of PA!

My friends, this is the civil rights issue of our time and day. Women in our country have been able to vote for nearly 100 years. Racial segregation and discrimination have been outlawed for over 50 years. But unborn babies still do not have the most basic right of them all – to be born! And ironically on the same day as the March for Life, the local news reported a man here in York County savagely killed his pregnant wife with a sword, and was charged with both the homicide of his wife and the homicide of an unborn child!

It's because of such truths and realities that I have grown in appreciating the great importance of the pro-life movement. And although the Catholic Church is a major motivating force behind it, being pro-life just isn't a Catholic thing, or a religious thing, or even an ethical thing. It's actually not a thing at all – they're people we're talking about! Real people who grow up to be people who do amazing things! And we heard from some of them at the huge rally that preceded the March. Now, I've heard a lot of speakers over the years, but this year had the best slate of speakers I've ever heard. We heard from a former Planned Parenthood Clinic Director, Abby Johnson; from Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York; and we even heard from Baltimore Ravens tight end, Benjamin Watson.

We heard from Kelly Ann Conway, the top campaign manager for Donald Trump, who as a wife, a mother, and a faithful Catholic herself, asked why we all were there, to which she replied, "To face criticism, ridicule, laws and lawmakers that diminish and erode our most basic right and the bedrock of our society...It means to stand up, stand tall and stand together against the indifference...and on behalf of the indefensible". In Jesus' words: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness – blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you, for our reward is greatness in the kingdom of heaven!"

We also heard from Katrina Gallic, a college student at the University of Mary in North Dakota, who proclaimed, "this is not someone else's problem. Indifference is not an option. Ending abortion is our responsibility...Our battle does not start in the courtroom... Our battle begins where we have the most influence, within our own hearts." In Jesus' words: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness – and, blessed are the meek, for in the land we will be satisfied"

We heard from Mike Pence, the highest ranking official to ever address in person the March for Life. He stated: “Let this movement be known for love, not anger. Let this movement be known for compassion, not confrontation... I believe we will continue to win the minds and hearts of the rising generation if our hearts first break for mothers and their unborn children and meet them where they are with generosity, not judgment. To heal our land and restore a culture of life, we must continue to be a movement that embraces all and shows the dignity and worth of every person.” In Jesus’ words: “Blessed are the peacemakers and the merciful, for we will be shown mercy and called children of God.”

We heard from another speaker, who shared the story of a struggling couple, who 41 years ago left their country for America, the land of opportunity. She said, “It was inconvenient for them to find out they were pregnant with their third child because both had to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. Some would’ve said it would have been easier to have an abortion, but this couple had to make a difficult choice... Well, 41 years ago that couple from Haiti could have made the choice to abort, but they didn’t; they chose life. And they followed and fostered that life, and the future and the dreams that baby would bring.” That 41-year old is Mia Love from Utah, the first black female Republican ever elected to Congress. Oh yes, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

And finally, we heard from Eric Metaxes, a nationally-syndicated radio show host, who wondered whether or not ABC would even cover this March. He said, “The media in America has not told the other side of the story, that women have been the victims of abortion and that abortion hurts women.” And referring to Madonna’s appalling and profane speech at the recent Women’s March in Washington, he went on to say: “Yes, I am outraged. Yes, I have **not** thought a lot about blowing up Madonna's house. And the reason I have not thought a lot about blowing up Madonna's house is because the Lord I follow commands me to love my enemies... And I would like you to join me right now in praying for Madonna [whose name means “Our Lady”, referring to the Blessed Mother]. “Madonna, Jesus loves you, and we are going to pray that his love be revealed to you...let us pray for Madonna right now.” And pray we did! Jesus said, “Blessed are the clean of heart, and blessed are they who mourn, for they will see God and be comforted.”

Yes, it was a very powerful March indeed. And all these individual voices I just quoted remind us what one voice on one day can accomplish – because now their words have been shared again to inspire you. But as much as we can do – and we can do a lot – it ultimately all depends on God, for only God can soften, mend, and change hearts. So, let us now pause and pray for all those women and men who have been hurt by abortion. Let us pray for their healing, and that they know the tender love and mercy of God for them just as they are. And let us pray for the end of the demand for and the support of abortion in our country. Let us now pray in the silence of our hearts...