



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics



ANNIVERSARY MASS FOR LEGAL PROTECTION OF THE UNBORN

JANUARY 22, 2022

"Recognizing the Divine Spark in Every Child Yet To Be Born"

**Homily given by Fr Brian Ingram, Pastor, St
Lawrence the Martyr**

A Tragic Anniversary

- for most of us, the word "anniversary" connotes something festive, something happy, something that invites celebration
- but not *all* anniversaries are happy occasions; take for example, the one we observe today—the 49th anniversary of the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision, which made abortion legal and easily attainable under almost any circumstance throughout the United States
- it is an anniversary that hundreds of thousands of people remember each January 22nd, but their mood is certainly *not* celebratory
- any year that wasn't overshadowed by COVID-19, enormous numbers of men, women and children—including some of you right here—would be making their way to Washington, D.C. for the annual *March for Life*, hoping that their persistent, non-violent, prayerful witness would chip away at the staggering blindness that afflicts our country, a blindness that refuses to see an unborn child as fully human, and deserving of legal protection and care
- having been on one of those buses a few times over the years, I have tremendous admiration for the marchers—Catholic and non-Catholic alike: they realize it's not enough simply *to say* that you believe this or that; sometimes you have to take a step further and *do something*; you have to find a way to give witness to what you claim is in your heart



B. Jeremiah

- but that's not easy for many of us . . . whether we want to admit it or not, we often have a great deal in common with the prophet Jeremiah, whose call was recounted in our first reading

- like Jeremiah, we demur . . . we protest that we're too young, (or too old!), that we don't possess any great eloquence or depth of knowledge; we don't have all the statistics at our fingertips; we don't want to anger our own friends or family; we're frightened of finding ourselves opposed or ridiculed
- but when God has his sights on us—as he did on Jeremiah—there's no per-suading him that he's chosen the wrong person: "To all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord."

C. Our Prophetic Role

- as I said, I think there's often a great deal of Jeremiah in many of us: we hear the message—in this case the conviction that all human life is precious to God from the moment of conception, and therefore deserving of every legal protection—we nod our heads and take it to heart, but we sometimes falter when it comes to taking that crucial next step and actually *doing something* about what we claim to believe
- this awful question of abortion, which for decades has been a blight on the spirit of our country, is a prime example: I'm sure the vast majority of the Catholic community—here on Long Island and throughout the nation—are convinced, *deeply convinced*, of the humanity of an unborn child, and believe that that child has the inviolable right to life
- but how many of us have done much about what we claim to believe? some may have traveled to Washington for the annual march; a few may be volunteers for the Life Center or another organization that supports young mothers in their choice to carry a baby to term; many may have dropped a few dollars in a special collection like the baby bottle campaign we're about to begin; but most of us don't do *a whole lot*—and here I accuse myself before anyone else
- today's anniversary is always cause for profound sadness, but at the same time many see reason for renewed hope today, particularly as some 26 states are attempting to limit or ban abortion, and the Supreme Court set to rule on a case from Mississippi that some believe might overturn Roe v. Wade altogether
- let's ask the intercession of the two extraordinary women in today's Gospel: Mary, who holds the Life of the world—as yet unborn—in her womb, and Elizabeth, whose own unborn baby leaps within her, just to be in the presence of the Word made flesh
- like them, may we recognize the divine spark in every child yet to be born, and translate that conviction into the way we speak, and vote, and dialogue, and protest, and live in our own place and time