

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Rachel Mourns for her Children – They are No More!" [Jer. 31:15b]

The above Scripture quote first applies to the children of Israel who were taken away to Babylon, but in the New Testament, this same Scripture was applied to the many children and infants who were murdered by Herod after the birth of Jesus. Three days after Christmas we commemorate this horrific event with the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

We must consider the blessings and the challenges that each life provides. We may remember that even the birth of Jesus involved some challenges for both Mary and Joseph. Mary, a young girl, who became an unwed mother, would most certainly have struggled in First Century Nazareth. She would have struggled not only with rumor, innuendo and derision; she might have even been put to death. [cf. MT 1:18-19 & DT 22:21-23] If it were not for the care and support of Joseph, her betrothed, and other members of her family, as well as her perseverance in faith, what would have become of Mary and her child?

Many a current day pregnancy presents challenges to the parents as well, challenges that can be overcome with faith and support. Reminding us of our faith, Pope St. John Paul II, writes in his encyclical on the Gospel of Life, *Evangelium Vitae* (EV), "Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart (cf. Rom 2:14-15) the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree." [EV, 2]

If we, as Catholics, wish to call ourselves "pro-life," then we must take care to support those

who are dealing with the challenges of accepting a new life into their lives. Every year on January 22, the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Church in the United States has called for a "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children." Prayer is a good place to start, but it cannot be the end of what do to assist these new parents. We must encourage, not vilify. We must accompany, not harass. We must assist, not castigate. And above all, we must love – the parents and the child. Indeed, we are called to support these parents through the trials of pregnancy and delivery. Also, we are called to provide resources for these parents to assist them in the growth and development of their children.

As I write that last statement, I am keenly aware of the revelations of abuse among Catholic clergy and other church personnel, so I feel that it is necessary to say that we, the Church, the Body of Christ, MUST promote the welfare and safety of all children, not just the unborn, in order to truly call ourselves "pro-life." We must end the scourge of abuse in our Church and in our families. In 2002, the US Bishops approved the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." It has been a good start and has been effective, but can we do more? When considering the protection of children, we should remember what St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians in reference to the Body of Christ: "But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. [...] Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary...so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it;" [1 Cor. 12:20, 22, 25-26a]

If you want to be "pro-life," pray for, support and love – the children and the parents.

