



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Fr. Ralph Wright
Homily
25th Ordinary Sunday, 2008

YOU ALSO GO INTO MY VINEYARD! (25 Ord.Sun.) (Revised text: original was not given from a prepared script. Ralph Wright O.S.B.)

The gospel reminds us that being envious is essentially unchristian. The owner of the vineyard chided the workers he had hired at the beginning of the day for 'grumbling' or 'being envious' because he had given those who only worked one hour the same 'day's wage'. We should be full of great joy if we hear that someone who has spent a lifetime saying 'No' to God's love, has in his final hour on earth repented and said 'Yes' so that God has been able to give him the unique love that he planned for him from all eternity. But now I want to talk about our Unborn Children and the coming election. A boy in my theology class a few years ago wrote about the value of human life in an essay that evoked from me this quasi-poem:

VITA HUMANA
A student of mine
the other day
when asked in a test
how valuable
was human life
wrote

"Well if God in Jesus
chose to die
for each one of us
you can't get
more valuable
than that."

My adult mind
stopped there
scalded—
it was a thought
only a child
could handle.

The fact that human life is this valuable from its very beginning and is to be cherished and protected is central to our faith. How strange it is that this fact is



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no longer central to our culture. Sixty years ago, way before ultrasound, the situation was different. After the horror of the Nazi eugenics program that occurred before and during World War II the World Medical Association adopted the Declaration of Geneva in 1948 setting forth a 'standard' for medical ethics: It runs: "I will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race, party politics or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient. I will maintain the utmost respect for human life, from the time of conception; even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity."

Before Pope Benedict came to the United States last April a video presentation was put out by the Vatican to prepare for his visit. In this he quoted the Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would have them do to you, and avoid doing what you would not want them to do. This "golden rule" is given in the Bible, but it is valid for all people, including non-believers."end of quote. Whether or not Pope Benedict meant to hint here at the whole phenomenon of abortion is not clear. It certainly remains one of the strongest arguments against it. I would not have wanted my life to be extinguished when I was still in the womb of my mother so I should not let it happen to someone else. When he gave his homily at Yankee stadium he was more explicit:

'May you find the courage to proclaim Christ, "the same, yesterday, and today and for ever" and the unchanging truths which have their foundation in him. These are the truths that set us free! They are the truths which alone can guarantee respect for the inalienable dignity and rights of each man, woman and child in our world — including the most defenseless of all human beings, the unborn child in the mother's womb.' End of quote.

To focus our minds a little on this issue I would like to conclude with a quotation from a joint pastoral letter published on September 12 by Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas and Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St Joseph:

I quote: "In 2004 a group of United States Bishops, acting on behalf of the USCCB and requesting counsel about the responsibilities of Catholic politicians and voters, received a memo from the office of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, which stated: "A Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil, and so unworthy to present himself for Holy Communion, if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate's permissive stand on abortion and/or euthanasia. When a Catholic does not share a candidate's stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted in the presence of proportionate reasons." End of quotation from Cardinal Ratzinger. The bishops continue: Could a Catholic in



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good conscience vote for a candidate who supports legalized abortion when there is a choice of another candidate who does not support abortion or any other intrinsically evil policy? Could a voter's preference for the candidate's positions on the pursuit of peace, economic policies benefiting the poor, support for universal health care, a more just immigration policy, etc. overcome a candidate's support for legalized abortion? In such a case, the Catholic voter must ask and answer the question: What could possibly be a proportionate reason for the more than 45 million children killed by abortion in the past 35 years? Personally, we cannot conceive of such a proportionate reason." end of quote from the pastoral.

In 1973 I was among several thousand who marched down town to a meeting outside the Old Court House, site of the famous Dredd Scott trial, to protest the Roe v Wade decision. This site chosen had momentous implications. The election on November 4th 2008 with the sanctity of human life on the table echoes in magnitude the abolition of slavery.