

Tuesday, January 21, 2014
Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
Evening Prayer for the March for Life

There is a story about a Cat and a Fox who could hear a pack of wild dogs barking in the distance. The Cat immediately suggested that they should get away before the dogs arrived.

The Fox said to the Cat, "I know a hundred different ways to escape from any danger."

"I have only one," said the Cat. "But I can generally manage with only one."

Just at that moment they heard the pack of dogs coming towards them, and the Cat immediately ran up a tree and hid in the branches. "This is my plan," said the Cat. "What are you going to do?"

The Fox thought first of one way and then another. While he was debating and thinking which way to go, it was too late - the wild dogs got him. The Cat looked down from the tree and quietly thought to himself, "Better to have just one way to go than a hundred choices that you cannot rely on."

I don't think that this story is one of Aesop's Fables, but it is very similar to that style. It is believed that Aesop was a slave in ancient Greece (perhaps in the 6th or 7th century B.C.) and his fables are fictions that point to the truth.

Very few of us find ourselves in the position of having to find the way to go when it comes to such a life or death situation as portrayed in the story of the Cat and the Fox.

In the Gospel reading we just heard, the disciples were being confronted with a life or death situation that was very personal. The dialogue between Jesus and the disciples took place at the Last Supper; it was right after Jesus announced the betrayal of Judas and Judas left the table and went on his way to put his plan into action.

The disciples had been warned about the pack of dogs out there in the distance and when they heard of Judas' betrayal, they began to fear that the dogs were getting closer.

In the Gospel it says that their hearts were troubled, which is putting it mildly. They were afraid; and they were especially disturbed because Jesus had just revealed his own distress about his betrayal and about his impending death and the passion that was about to begin that evening.

We are gathered together in prayer on the eve of the day, which for all these years is an observance of something that is a matter of life and death; the anniversary of the infamous Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision.

Some have said that a culture of death has taken root in our country and in our world and it is represented by a disregard for the dignity and sanctity of human life.

We hear about it in the news in the many so-called choices that are made when the answer to human troubles is violence, war, terrorism, or massacre of innocent persons just because of their religious beliefs, or the taking of the innocent life of unborn babies through abortion on demand.

I recently had a conversation with some dedicated Catholic businessmen from Pittsburgh who give a considerable amount of their time in the faith formation of teenagers.

Once a month these men take young people to stand across the street from an abortion clinic in Pittsburgh where they spend the whole time praying for everyone who goes inside that place.

They pray for the medical personnel and the women who go there and they pray for the supporters who stand outside of the abortion clinic that encourage everyone to exercise what they claim as their right to be “pro-choice.”

These Catholic businessmen will be in Washington tomorrow for the March for Life. Many of them have been participating for years. They reminded me that there are two things that remain an encouragement for them.

- First, they reminded me that the March for Life and the Pro-Life movement is as strong as ever; it's not going away.
- Second, and this is the one they emphasized the most, is their conviction that more and more young people are beginning to understand what it means to be Pro-Life.

They explained to me that when they talk with the young people, their conversation often betrays the troubled hearts and the fears that teenagers have, especially when they begin to understand that being “Pro-Choice” is not such a good thing.

And they explained that young people are searching for the truth and that much of their distress comes from not knowing the truth. Like the disciples who were with our Lord Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, their hearts are troubled.

Their worst fear is having so many choices that in the end it will leave them confused and ill-prepared to know and do what is right. They want to know, which way is the right way?

The answer comes loud and clear in the Gospel reading when Jesus tells the disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled, you have faith in God; have faith in me.”

Jesus assures them that he is answer to their fears when he says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

The story of the Cat and the Fox does not end with the demise of the foolish Fox who bragged about having so many choices about how to save himself from the impending evil, but he was so overwhelmed and confused by those choices, that he was doomed.

The story of the Cat and the Fox ends with the Cat saying, "Better to have just one way to go than a hundred choices that you cannot rely on."

Jesus reminds us that there is only one way, one truth, and one life. And that way, truth, and life is Jesus Christ.

I thank God for all of you who have come here to pray on this eve of the March for Life. I know that many of you plan to attend.

I will be there and I am looking forward to a big dose of encouragement from the young people of St. Joseph Catholic Academy who have asked me to be with them.

Not only have they invited me to travel with them and walk with them during the March in Washington,

- but they have asked me to talk with them about what it means to be a young Catholic committed to standing up for the dignity and sanctity of human life from conception to natural death;
- and they have asked me to talk about what it means that it's "Better to have just one way to go than a hundred choices that you cannot rely on."

I am confident that the Catholic businessmen from Pittsburgh are onto something. The Pro-Life movement is not going away and there are more and more young people who are beginning to realize what is at stake and why all of this is so important.

They know as teenagers and young adults that in our world today, all of us will have days when our hearts are troubled. But most of all, they have faith in Jesus Christ, the only one who can take away our distress and our confusion, because he is the way, the truth, and the life.

At the close of World Youth Day in Brazil last summer, Pope Francis encouraged young Catholics to make some noise and let others know what they know about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He tells us not to let our hearts be troubled. These young people going to Washington to make some noise in defense of life certainly make my heart less troubled.

I pray for the young people of our Church and our country who have been inspired to be involved. I ask you to pray for them as I pray for you as well.

In the Gospel, Thomas said to Jesus, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?"

It's awesome to know that more and more young people are coming to know the way, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will most certainly be with them on the way tomorrow and for years to come.