

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

The Very Rev. Fr. Arthur W. Ward, Jr. + Dean

Scripture: Psalm 139:11-19

"An Ever Present Evil"

A DIABOLICAL BILL

Earlier this week on Tuesday January 22 on the 46th anniversary of Roe v. Wade – the court case in which the Supreme Court made abortion legal through the first 24 weeks of pregnancy as the law of the land, our New York State government expanded the right to have an abortion to the full nine months of pregnancy as long as the mother's mental or physical health was in jeopardy. Not the mother's life – but her mental and physical well-being - as long as she can get a doctor to sign off on it. Furthermore, the Reproductive Health Acts removed the charge of homicide if a baby is killed while in the womb due to a physical assault on the mother. The act states, *"every individual who becomes pregnant has the fundamental right to choose to carry the pregnancy to term, to give birth to a child, or to have an abortion."* The law also removes abortion from the definition of homicide and New York's criminal code altogether. Previously, New York law treated the murder of an unborn child in its the third trimester as a felony offense punishable by up to seven years in prison. No longer. Finally, the bill expands the number of professionals who will be able to perform abortions to nurses, midwives, and physicians assistants. In short, this bill decriminalizes abortion as a whole for the entire nine months of pregnancy. It is by far the most expansive law allowing abortion of any state in the union. New York will now be ground zero for those seeking late term abortions. Significantly, upon Governor Cuomo signing the bill into law, there was a standing ovation by the majority Democratic Party for 20 minutes. Later that evening, in New York City the Empire State Building was lit up in a pink light to highlight the bill as a triumph for women's rights. The governor stated, *"Today we are taking a giant step forward in the hard-fought battle to ensure a woman's right to make her own decisions about her own personal health, including the ability to access an abortion."*

To say that this bill is a bad bill is an understatement. It is diabolical and an abomination plain and simple. It strengthens the belief that the baby in the womb is merely property that can be discarded if it is unwanted or considered a burden. The Democrats in Albany had strongly advocated for the bill for many years and Governor Cuomo has also pushed for it throughout his time as governor. Well, they finally got their wish when last November several Republican state senators lost to their Democratic counterparts. Beforehand the Republicans held a one seat majority in the State Senate. It was the only thing stopping the Democrats. And now they have free reign and enacted this legislation by a 38-24 vote. They now hold a 40 to 23 majority in the state senate. So it shouldn't surprise us that the state legislators also just recently passed a law forbidding gay conversion therapy for minors. Chris Jacobs, Patrick Gallivan, Michael Razenhofer and Rob Ort represent our area and all voted against the new law but Tim Kennedy the only Democratic Senator west of Syracuse did not! He represents Lackawanna, Cheektowaga, and parts of Buffalo.

So why did this happen? In order to protect Roe v. Wade the Democrats went to the fullest extent possible to enable doctors to commit infanticide up to the final days of a nine month term. Why? To try to show that the baby in the womb really is not fully human. Because if the baby is human then it in fact is murder. So that is why it is no longer homicide to kill the baby in the mother’s womb. Besides it is really the woman’s body. The woman should have the final say of life or death. And the government is now endorsing that ultimate authority over the child. And yet, now through technology, a baby that is 24 weeks old has an 80% chance of surviving if it is born prematurely and 90% if it reaches 6 months. Now, through technology we can see the baby’s heartbeat at 6 weeks and its incredible development. Through technology we can see that the life inside a mother’s womb is not just a blob of tissue but a unique human being fearfully and wonderfully made. In fact, before we had ultrasounds and computers that could unpack the incredible detail of our DNA and the cells of the human body, this is what God’s Word had to say about us. **Psalm 139:13-17: “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. 14I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. 15My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth 16Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. 17How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.**

What eloquent words to describe the miracle of life? What life affirming words to describe the love of God for each one of us. Every human being has value, has worth, is worthy of life no matter how they got here. Why? Because every human being is made in the image of God. It is why after Noah and his family survived the flood, and God gave them the freedom to kill animals for food and sacrifice, that God said that anyone who intentionally takes the life of a person, their blood will be demanded them! Because they are made in God’s image. That’s what separates human beings from animals –we are made in God’s image. You kill a human being it is like killing God. And isn’t that what we all did when Jesus God’s Son was nailed to the cross.

And yet today in New York State, I am more liable to be condemned and thrown into prison for destroying an Eagle’s egg than if I kill a baby within a mother’s womb. In fact, it is more dangerous to be a human being in the womb than an eagle in its nest.

Such warped thinking has its origins in the Fall of man and the temptations of the deceiver – Lucifer – who appears as an angel of light first – who offers supposed a better way – of self-fulfillment and pleasure – recall the fruit on the tree would be good for food, pleasing to the eyes and able to make one wise.

That is the deception behind abortion – the baby is keeping us back, the baby is troublesome, the baby is limiting my freedom – no thought of what the conception of this unique human being made in the image of God is teaching us. No thought that God has designed our world this way and that it is a way to keep us accountable and remind us what is most important in life – loving relationships. No – just cut it out and kill it and move on. And some consider this a blessing. There have been a number of clergy in the wider Church who have spoken of abortion as something to celebrate. One woman wrote a book

celebrating her abortion and how it was the best thing that could have happened to her for it enabled her to go out and pursue her dreams and become the woman she wanted to be.

Such feelings emanate from a diabolical philosophy of life that on the surface looks good and makes sense but ultimately is evil. It is from the same spirit that led many in the ancient world to sacrifice their children to the gods they worshipped. We find this abominable practiced introduced in the land of Israel. It was one of the reasons God had the Israelites destroy the Canaanites. But this evil crept back in after the leadership and the people turned from God. You see the leadership turned from the authority of God's Word and Law and the people had a choice. They could acquiesce or stand against the King and his throne. During the rise of Adolph Hitler the people had a choice. They could speak out and rise up against the evil philosophy that Jews were at the root of Germany's problems and did not deserve equal rights or remain silent. And what happened the denial of rights turned to the denial of life.

We have a choice we can remain silent or speak up. We can ignore this abomination or do something about it. I have heard some over the years criticize me when I address the politics of our land. But do you see why I do so? Do you see what happens when a humanistic philosophy takes root and is left unchecked. I am sure that when pastors spoke out against Adolph Hitler there were those who said why are you doing that? Stay out of politics. No, can't do that. Sorry. My conscience and more importantly the Holy Spirit won't let me do that.

Listen for a moment what the Holy Spirit said concerning life in the womb. **Jeremiah 1:4-5**, "*Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, 5'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.*"

Noticed God recognized the reality of Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb and while he was in the womb before he was even born!

Or how about just last month when we celebrated the Incarnation of our Lord at Christmas? **Matthew 1:18-20**: "*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."*

The very fact that Jesus, the pre-incarnate Son, became flesh at the point of conception highlights the reality that he was human from the point of conception. He didn't grow into a human being. He already was at the point of conception!

Luke 1:39-44: "*Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43"And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? 44"For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy."*

And what did Jesus say about children? **Mark 10:13-16:** *"And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. 14But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." 16And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands on them."*

Mt. 18:5-6: *"And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; 6but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."*

The creation and preservation of life is a sacred responsibility given to all by God. Jesus came for this reason. He said in **John 10:10** *"I came that you may have life and have it abundantly."* But before He said that, He said, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy*" Who's the thief? The devil. What is his purpose? – to lie and steal – deception. What follows his thievery? Killing? And what follows killing? Destroyed lives. That is abortion in a nutshell. A thievery of life. **Ps. 139:19:** *"O that You would slay the wicked, O God; Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed."*

There is a reason why God does not make abortion an easy prospect. For most of human history it was a very difficult. Yes, the mother could take certain herbs that would sicken her and maybe cause her to miscarry but there was no guarantee. It has only until it has become medically easy and behind closed doors, that we have seen its acceptance and the obscene number of babies aborted. It's tough for a reason! You are taking innocent life! I think all of those politicians who support it should visit an abortion clinic and witness what takes place.

So what can we do? Stay involved in knowing where you state senators and assemblymen stand on the issue. Vote your conscience and God's Word. Continue to support pregnancy centers, like Northtown Pregnancy Center, that encourage mothers to keep their babies or give them up for adoption. Write Governor Cuomo and let him know you are disturbed by his support of this new law – the New York State Reproductive Law; **The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo Governor of New York State; NYS State Capitol Building; Albany, NY 12224.** Write your state senators and assemblymen either commending them for their opposition to the bill and encourage them to work for its repeal or expressing your disappointment if they actually supported the bill.

I will also look at ways we may join together with other likeminded churches to let our voice be known. But again, the best way to respond is those I have just mentioned. The truth is we are in a war and the enemy – evil is ever present. The devil doesn't quit. His deception still reigns. Many are still in darkness. But thanks be to God we have the answer. His name is Jesus Christ. So whether you have had an abortion or were once pro-choice, it is not the past that matters but we do now in the present – so that our future outshines our past. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!