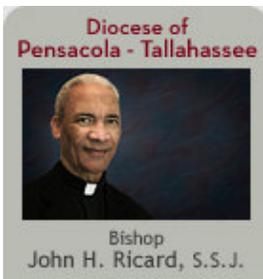


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Abortion: 50 million lost opportunities

Excerpts from the homily of Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ, at the Jan. 22 Mass for Life at Little Flower Parish, Pensacola.

Posted: 01.30.09

Tonight, my dear friends in Christ, we join Catholics and other people of good will throughout the United States as we observe the anniversary of the infamous Supreme Court decision, Roe v Wade. That decision of our Supreme Court has since its inception resulted in the slaughter of more than 50 million unborn children in these United States.

This means that well over 50 million innocent children were never given the opportunity of seeing the light of day; they were never given the chance to look into the eyes of their mothers or find from her a loving embrace. They were never given the chance to take their first breath, go to the playground, attend school, chase butterflies or laugh at clowns; or enjoy the beauty of this gift which we call human life.

We will never know of the contribution these 50 million souls could have made to our nation and our world. We will forever remain in the dark about the new discoveries in medicine they could have uncovered. We will never experience the engineering feats or the marvels of new architecture which they could have unfolded. We will never hear the exciting melodies of the new symphonies they could have composed, never know of their novel insights into poetry, literature or their discoveries of new

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stars in our universe if they had been given the chance to live.

Because they were not allowed to live, our nation remains impoverished when it could have been enriched. Because they were not allowed to live, our nation remains in darkness when it could have been enlightened. Because they were not allowed to live, it remains in ignorance when it could have guided by a higher truth.

So it is fitting that we are here at Mass in this church today, to first of all pray and seek the mercy and forgiveness of God. We are here to gain new strength for the battle and that hearts may be changed.

We pray tonight most of all that this scourge may end; that our nation makes reparation and forgiveness for this sin committed against the God of life and the human family. We pray that those women and men who make these choices which result in the slaughter of the unborn be converted and live and turn to the God, “who desires not the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live,” in the words of the prophet Isaiah.

As we always are to do when we face difficulties, we turn to God and seek his direction in his word spoken and written to us by his prophets and saints of long ago. Our first reading comes to us from the prophet Jonah. The book of the prophet Jonah is written to show us that God above all is a God of love and mercy who would rather forgive his people than punish and destroy them. God directs Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh, the capitol of the great empire of Assyria.

Jonah started through the city proclaiming, “In 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed!” The people of Nineveh believed God’s message. They fasted, and all the people, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth to show that they had repented. God saw what they did; he saw that they had given up their wicked behavior. So he changed him mind and did not punish them as he had said he would.

There is a striking similarity between this scene and our nation. Nineveh was great and powerful, like our own country. This capital city’s influence reached over many lands and nations, like our own. Nineveh’s sin was so great it reached the heavens

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and provoked the impending wrath of God. Its greatest sin was the slaughter of its young in sacrifices to the idol Baal. We cannot help but find a striking parallel in our nation's slaughter of its unborn in abortion clinics.

But in many ways Nineveh was dissimilar from us. When Jonah walked through the city and spoke, they heard him. Our country refuses to heed to cry of the unborn child in the womb. Unlike this country and its leadership, Nineveh was determined to amend its ways. When the king heard Jonah's message, he put on sackcloth and exchanged his throne for ashes. He ordered all to fast and do penance. Thus Nineveh recognized the error of its ways and changed dramatically, so that God relented and did not punish them.

In a few weeks we will begin the season of Lent. During that season we have a choice; we can be like Nineveh and heed the voice of the prophet and seize this opportunity as our time to lay aside finery and put on the sackcloth of intensive prayer and fasting, and speaking on behalf of the unborn. Or we can ignore his voice and face the wrath brought on by our misdeeds. Perhaps, if we are as determined as the people of Nineveh, God may relent with us and strengthen our efforts to rid our nation and world of this scourge of the slaughter of the innocents.

I encourage you to continue in the battle, to support the efforts of those who do and to be ceaseless in your prayer that God may hear our prayer and bring many more to the light of faith and fullness of life in his Son Jesus Christ.

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