

Just before the last election I placed in the bulletin a resolution adopted by the General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church that stated that a candidates position on the Sanctity of Human life should be a deciding factor on who we vote for. I was asked why a candidates position on the Sanctity of Human life should be a factor on who we vote for and my response was that it really does affect every decision they make.

Today, January 18 is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, and no, you will not find it on the Liturgical Calendar. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany. However, for the REC and other Christian Churches, it is when we commemorate the Roe versus Wade decision from the Supreme Court that legalized abortion – or as we know it, the murder of unborn babies. It is not a topic that people generally want to talk about, but we must.

Since 1973 abortion is considered a right in this country and it has created what I call a culture of death. When Lilah was pregnant with Mathew, we went to a mid-wife whose partner had an office in the Elizabeth Blackwell Health Center for Women in Philadelphia. We did not know it at the time, but they also performed abortions there. When we arrived, there were signs all over the place “Keep Abortion Safe and Legal.”

As we riding up the elevator I felt a pressure in my chest – I could barely breath. I know that it was the presence of Satan, because he was pleased with what was going on there. As I told someone from the church we were going to at the time this story, he said that he felt the same way. Needless to say, we never went back there.

Statistically, almost 50 million babies have been aborted since that decision in 1973, however they do tell us that the abortion rate is going down the last few years, which is a good thing. Sadder still is the fact that abortions are higher in minorities. African-Americans account for about 12 % of the population, but account for 26% of the abortions in this country. This goes along with the views of Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood who wanted to rid the world of those she considered unwanted.

It is ironic, that we see signs that say “save the whales” or stop the so-called global warming, but you don’t see a lot of signs that say “save the baby humans.”

Scientifically we know a lot about that which is being formed in the womb. At conception, all the genetic material is present. At 15-16 days after conception the circulatory system begins to form. At 20 days the heart is formed and begins to beat one day later. At 28 days 40 pairs of muscles along the trunk are developed and brain waves can also be measured at this time. At 30 days ear and nasal development has begun and at 35 days all the regions of the brain have been formed. At 42 days the skeleton is complete and reflexes are present.

At 49 days all inner and outer organs are established. The baby has a face with eyes, nose, lips, tongue and milk teeth. And at 8 weeks all organs are functioning – stomach, liver, kidneys and brain. What happens after this is continued growth. So indeed, that which is being formed in the womb has all the characteristics of a human being.

Now, before you ask, there is no specific verse in the Bible that says to the effect: “Thou shalt not commit abortion.” However, almost every week we say “*Thou shalt do no murder*” as we recite the 10 commandments. As you will see, the taking of a life before it is born, is just that. I realize that these are strong words ... but, I believe that clear Biblical teaching leaves us no other option.

So, where do we begin. We begin at the beginning, in the story of creation – Genesis 1:26-27: “*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

We see from these verses, from the first book of the Bible is that man is created in the image of God. This does not mean that we look like God, with arms and legs. What this means is that man (and women) faithfully represent God with intellect, limited knowledge and a will. Included in this, is that as His creation, we have an intimacy with Him, which of course, has been corrupted by sin, but we can also have communion with Him – and as we know, it is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we look the Scriptures then as a whole, we see much more. Psalm 51:5 says: “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*” What this verse teaches us is that from the moment of conception we are sinners – that means that we have a soul at the moment of conception. Along with this is Psalm 58:3: “*The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.*” So much for the concept of an innocent child!

And in Isaiah 44:2 we read: “*Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.*” The Lord is forming that which is growing in the womb – no doubt about it.!

Jeremiah 1:5 is also very telling: “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.*” This passage is part of the Lord’s call of Jeremiah to be a prophet – telling us that even before he was formed in the womb, Jeremiah had been set apart by God to be his chosen vessel.

One of the most powerful passages concerning the beginning of life is Psalm 139. Psalm 139:1-16 (READ). Look again closely at 139:13-16: “*For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.*”

Again, powerful words from the Word of God. All our days are known by God before one of them comes to be. And that which is being formed in the womb is that which is being put together by God.

One other passage that is also very powerful is that which we read in Luke 1. As Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist is visited by Mary, who was carrying the Lord Jesus we read these words – Luke 1:44 , where Elizabeth says: “*For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.*” Again, further proof that that which is being formed in the womb is a baby.

We also see in the scriptures, God’s control over conception. We read of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:5,6: “*But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.*”

In Genesis 29:31 we read: “*And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.*” Also in Genesis 30:22 we read: “*And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.*”

We see clearly that it is the Lord God that shuts up the womb and opens the womb. Further evidence that that which is being formed in the womb is being created by God. And the destruction of the baby in the womb is destroying that which has been created in the image of God.

These are the facts that are before us. And you might rightly ask, “what can I do about it?” The most important thing we can do is pray that the Lord would remove this scourge from our nation. The other thing that we can do is be pro-active in helping those with unplanned pregnancies know that there are options beside abortion.

There are pregnancy centers out there that need our prayers and our support. But most of all, we must let it be known, that life begins at conception, and we need to pray that more people will understand and believe that.