

Right to Life Deacon George Collins

On this special day we recognize the Right to Life movement. Many seem to wander around like Lady Macbeth wailing, "Out, out damned spot!" This is a tragic sense of life. But if we do not do that, then life is even more tragic because we do not know that society is deformed and broken, and we become focused on the negative. Right to Life is not negative, but positive if we would but stop and think. All sinfulness will never be destroyed in this world; yet the amount of goodness in this world is up to you.

I would like to tell you a story. One day, a mother conceived twins. One child was a girl, the other a boy. Months passed and they developed. As they grew, they sang for joy, "Isn't it great to be alive." Together they explored their mother's womb. When they found their mother's life cord, they shouted for joy. "How great is our mother's love, that she shares her life with us." Soon the twins began to change dramatically.

"What does this mean?" asked the boy. "It means our life in the womb is coming to an end," said the girl. "But I don't want to leave the womb," said the boy. "I want to stay here forever." "We have no choice," said the girl. "But maybe there is life after birth." "How can that be?" asked the boy. "We will shed our mother's cord and how is life possible without it? Besides, there is evidence that others were here before us, and none of them ever came back to tell us that there is life after birth. No, this is the end."

And so the boy fell into despair saying, "If life in the womb ends in death, what is its purpose? Maybe we don't even have a mother. Maybe we made her up just to feel good." "But we must have a mother," said the girl. "How else did we get here? How else do we stay alive?"

And so the last days in the womb were filled with deep questioning and fear. Finally, the moment of birth arrived. When the

twins opened their eyes, they cried for joy. What they saw exceeded their wildest dreams.

Life is about being open to possibilities and the right to these possibilities. Everyone has the right to possibilities and every life is for the glory of God, because life is the result of God's love for us. He creates us in love, he redeems us in love, he forgives us in love. Every life has a purpose in God's plan of creation, therefore it has a unique dignity no matter how deformed, weak, handicapped, unwanted or inconvenient. When we were born, we did not come with a guarantee label that we would always work the way we expect, but we would work according to God's plan and His will. For every weakness, every fault, every flaw in a life is an opportunity to love more deeply, not for a rejection as being less perfect than the rest of us. For even those people have a dignity and a purpose and a right to life. And God loves them also in a very special way. God does not measure life as we do. When we reject life, we reject God's most precious gift, we reject his plan of life, and we reject God, Himself.

Our Scripture passage reaffirms the right to life by providing an insight into marriage and with good reason. For marriage is about family, and family is about children. Children, in turn, are about life. The sole purpose of life is the glorification of God, not man. The stronger a marriage and family life is, the stronger we understand and hold dear the "right to life." A strong family life is about sharing, caring, giving, unity and generosity. A weak family life is about selfishness, less respect for life, and less respect for the rights of others. If you cannot produce then your life is of no value. If you do not seem to have the potential to produce, then you have no right to life. If you can no longer produce then you become a burden to be eliminated.

It all has its roots in our concept of marriage. I frequently ask young couples, of all the signs and symbols in the whole world, what sign or symbol do you think best represents marriage? Invariably they say: a heart, a ring, a lit candle, the vows. The greatest symbol

of marriage and right to life is staring us right in the face this morning. It is Jesus on the cross. It says to us, "Look what I have done for you, because I love you." It is sacrifice, which is the greatest symbol of love and right to life because it tells us how valuable each life is.

I have another story to tell you. It is about Larry, who was a patient in my care for several years. Larry was mildly retarded. He usually was an easy going person, except when he spotted a cigarette butt. Then he became highly aggressive and would fight tooth and nail to get the butt and put it in his mouth. Most of the time, Larry was chewing on several butts at a time. As a result of his aggressiveness, his facial features had many lumps, bumps and scars and red blotches from his altercations with other patients and staff. He certainly was not the most handsome or attractive in appearance. He stuffed so many cigarette butts in his mouth that he drooled a golden brown saliva. This was not good for his health and we tried to take them from him with very little success. Further altercations could only lead to harm for him or the staff. We discovered that Larry loved licorice. So we devised a plan to trade licorice for cigarette butts. At first it wasn't successful, but gradually we won him over so his desire for cigarette butts gave way to his desire for licorice. At first we didn't trade but gave him all the licorice he wanted. Then we began to trade. The more we traded the smaller we made the licorice. We were able to reduce his assaultive behavior dramatically but didn't totally eliminate his desire for cigarette butts. We did, however, have great success.

One day as I entered the ward, Larry was sitting by himself and seemed quite down-hearted. When he saw me he called, "George, please come and sit with me. I'm lonely." So I sat with him and said, "Larry, what would you like to talk about?" He was quiet for a few moments and then said, "George, why did God make me this way?" I was shocked and speechless for a few moments. He caught me by surprise. The only thing I could manage was, "Larry, God loves you in a very special way." He responded, "When I see God, I'm going to tell him it wasn't very nice what he did." I said, "Larry, when you

see God he will have a very special reward just for you." He thought for a moment, then asked, "Will he give me licorice?" I said, "Larry, He will give you all the licorice you can eat, everyday." He thought for a few more moments and then responded, "Oh, that will be nice."

Isn't it amazing what a piece of licorice can do to change your perspective! The licorice we need in our lives is the sweetness of love and the willingness to trade selfish ways for the joy of charity so that when we see God, we can say, "Oh, this is very nice."

The gift of Life is wonderful and precious and amazing no matter in what quantity it is given. I have never yet seen a baby who wasn't thrilled, just to be alive, to be able to trust the parents who cooperated with God to give life. This is the right to life, that every life has the right to develop its possibilities for the praise and glory of God. No one has the right to deny this opportunity. Life is life from the moment of conception when it is called into existence by name by the will of God. And no one has the right to deny life and thus frustrate God's plan and reject his unique love. How much licorice will it take for us to learn the lesson of love? Amen.