

Friday 20 January, 2006
Mass for the Unborn
30th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*
Cathedral of Christ the King
Atlanta, Georgia

✠ Wilton D. Gregory,
Archbishop of Atlanta

“An Old Fashion Statement for Life”

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Social and public standards continue to vary in just about every area of life. At the beginning of each year, there are countless new laws that supplant old laws and most of us have to check into behavior and activities that may have become illegal with the mere changing of the clock. The once socially acceptable ways of doing things in next to no time become obsolete and even useless, just consider the quick turnover in technology. The most up to date computer of last year is probably now hopelessly slow and inadequate. The fashions that were really hot last fall may be completely obsolete now – just ask your teenagers about the life span of fashions if you honestly want to be shocked. Language, fashions, technology, scientific knowledge, and medicine are just some of the facets in life where change happens with breathtaking swiftness.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.*

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me”

Uh oh, that sounds to me like other changes in standards. Moreover, it is perhaps the greatest and most enduring change in standards that any of us will ever be asked to accept. We are called to a new standard, a higher standard, a Divine standard – and one that will not pass away as ever outmoded or obsolete.

These are the new standards that dare to suggest that we are to view life and our image of others in a different way. These new standards are even so revolutionary as to propose that no life, no person, and no class of people are beyond our love. They are standards that say that there is no such thing as an inopportune life or a reason, no matter how grave, no matter how serious, no matter how convincing that renders a life useless and deserving of hatred. The Word of the God reminds us that it is no longer fashionable to hate – and it never was. Yet, just like every other measure of living, it is difficult to undergo a fashion change in our attitudes toward life.

We all grow too comfortable with old standards and time-honored ways of doing things – even when the approaches and attitudes that we follow are only 33 years old. We often find it difficult to appreciate most new fashions when they first appear. We are all very much creatures of habits and we like to make excuses to justify doing things exactly as we have always done them. It is easier to come up with justifications for our old ways of doing things than to change our standards.

For thirty-three years, regrettably the people of our nation have been given all types of deceptive rationalizations to continue our dreadful practice of killing infant children within the womb. Various people have called it a choice, others claim it as a human right, some have defended it as a personal decision, a few even suggest it as merely a womanly act of self-determination – anything to keep from accepting God’s standard of respect and love for every human life.

Today, we find ourselves hopelessly mired in flawed excuses that now extend to other acts of brutality against the terminally ill and aged against even those who have committed heinous crimes. Even this very week, the Supreme Court has validated a law that allows a person to take their own life. We tell ourselves that capital punishment prevents

crime that such horrible criminals deserve to die – even as we continue to learn that some convicted persons been sentenced to death and later exonerated by DNA tests or whose very trials have been judged to have been unfair or biased. We continue to pursue unspeakable human brutality. We look for any grounds to avoid the Divine standard of respect for every living person. Yet we are called to a standard that dares to demand that we become perfect, just as our heavenly Father is perfect -- be holy, for I, the Lord, your God am holy. Standards have changed and too many of us are hopelessly obsolete in our attitudes toward life itself. At Eucharist this evening, let us pray for a widely accepted way of viewing and valuing all human life – God’s way – an old fashioned yet perfectly contemporary way of seeing every life as Sacred, Holy, and inalienable – as our old fashion Declaration of Independence even now describes it. But then that too is an old document but not as old as the Gospels.