

Monday 22 January, 2007
Mass for the Unborn
34th Anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* Decision
Shrine of the Immaculate Conception
Atlanta, Georgia

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As the Father has sent me, so I send you. *And just how did the Father send the Son?* The commission that the Risen Lord gives to his disciples is to follow the pattern that has been established by the Father in sending His Son. The memories of Christmas are still very clear and quite present in the mind and the heart of the Church. The Father sent the Son as an infant – a poor Baby – unrecognized for His dignity – unnoticed by the powerful – unwelcomed by almost every one except His Mother, Joseph, and the curious shepherds. That is how the Father sent the Son and, if His words are to be believed, that is how He sends us, not as powerful and dominant, but as gentle and giving – and the commission is preceded and succeeded by the blessing of peace.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Pro-Life movement has been our willingness to present ourselves as did the Lord Jesus as unwilling to be silenced or neglected by those who are the powerful and the assertive forces of our society, but as the persistent and gentle voice of truth. Jesus sends us as did the Father send Him as a voice that will not be hushed or put aside – but as a movement that is grounded in hope and in commitment and conditioned in and with peace.

For these 34 years that our nation has endured its sorrowful legacy of rejecting and denying the dignity of the gift of human life, we have remained as a voice that would not be silenced or would not be set aside. Christ was born quietly – without fanfare – with our prominence, but

with an incredible persistent promise of hope. *As the Father has sent Me – so I send you.*

The work of promoting the dignity of human life cannot and must not add to the violence and the hostility that is at the very heart of the culture of death. We must go about our tasks with the same sense of serenity, determination, gentility of spirit, and commitment that marked Christ's own life. Our greatest witness is to provide the constant message of respect for all human life. In the face of the most brutal activity that has been the hallmark of these past 34 years since abortion became the law of this nation, we must go about our confrontation of this violence with the calm and tranquility that marked Christ's birth and His entire life. Even as He faced His own death he went about fulfilling the Father's Will with such deep peace that even those who put Him to death had to marvel at His inner strength, His steadfastness, and His resolve.

As the Father sent me, so I send you! The message and the challenge is clear, we cannot give up, we cannot counter violence and hatred with more of the same, but only with the peace that comes from knowing that we *shall overcome* because it is God's Will. There may be some who thought that our determination would wither and subside; they have grown disappointed that for these 34 years the otherwise impatient Americans who often grow weary of and unwilling to patiently endure difficulties have persisted. We have done so because we know that we have been sent as the Father sent His Son – with a calm and a hope that is unstoppable and patient beyond our meager abilities to continue a struggle that seems so difficult to sustain. The dedication of those who have been the face of the Pro-Life Movement has forced even those with whom we disagree to admit that we are a force with which they must contend. *We shall not be moved* – as the African-American hymn reminded the participants of the Civil Rights Movement during the years of that long – and at times frustratingly slow social movement of the past generation.

At Eucharist today, we hear the words of the Risen Christ spoken first to those stunned disciples that He commissioned them to go forth – surrounded by His peace – to a world that needed to hear the message of life no less than does our own. May all of you and your colleagues who

are at school, at home, or at work today be heartened by the Lord's charge to be in the world as He was in the world as a voice of calm but determined truth so that in this society we might once again know and accept the message of truth about the irreversible dignity of all human life and that one day a child within the womb will enjoy the security that was once a guarantee of law and needs to be placed under that security once more.