

Monday 23 January, 2021

Mass for the Unborn

Shrine of the Immaculate Conception  
*Atlanta, Georgia*

✚ Wilton D. Gregory,  
*Archbishop of Atlanta*

*If a kingdom is divided against itself that kingdom cannot stand!* That was the caution and the ageless warning of the Lord of the Universe and the Prince of Peace to everyone who dared to confront Him in His own era and in ours as well. This blessed nation of ours now seems to be at times a kingdom quite divided against itself. Very early on in our history that most essential national introductory document *The Declaration of Independence* declared that among the inalienable human rights are to be found *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

We are a nation that was born while proclaiming life to be among the greatest and most enduring of all human rights. Yet since 1973, we apparently have begun to withdraw from that hallowed assertion. At that moment we became a kingdom divided against itself – by pitting life against liberty and making it subordinate to an individual's pursuit of happiness.

Jesus in His own time was honestly suspected of being in league with the devil – as preposterous as that may now seem – all because of His ability to heal and to cure those who were sick and possessed by evil spirits. Some of His contemporaries suggested that because illness and possession by wicked spirits and even death itself obviously belonged to the realm of Beelzebub, only someone who was working with the very power of Satan could have displayed such power as did Jesus.

Jesus instructed those who so challenged Him and all of us besides to recognize a simple truth -- *If a kingdom is divided against itself that kingdom cannot stand!* This is no mere political conclusion; it is moral prudence at the very highest level. We will never truly be free – any of us – without a reverence for all human life. Life is the first gift that every one of us has received from the Hand of God and that gift establishes the very foundation for all of the other freedoms that we ever might enjoy.

A nation divided against itself places freedom of choice before even life itself – but there will be no freedom of choice or any other rights for those who are never permitted even to be born and the Declaration of Independence which listed three inalienable rights has now been twisted and forced to endorse only one – and one that can never be exercised without the first of those inalienable rights

– that of life itself. We have become a kingdom divided against itself in choosing to highlight one inalienable right at the expense of all the others.

Occasionally we in the Pro-Life Movement are also accused of highlighting only one of those inalienable rights. Yet we believe that we must begin with Life and thereafter do we gladly and enthusiastically recognize the liberty and the pursuit of happiness that are only possible for those who are blessed with the gift of life. It is the first – but not the only right that we are blessed to enjoy in this great nation of ours.

We have become a kingdom divided against itself and sadly even against life itself. If Jesus' admonition is to be taken seriously, we must begin to fear the results of such an unacceptable state as a sign of what our future might be. We have devalued life not only at its beginning, but for those who are sick and elderly and poor, for those who are less than physically robust, for those who are imprisoned and perhaps mentally unstable. Once we chose to deny the value of innocent life waiting to be born, it was an easy transition to debase life at any other moment as well.

We pray this morning for a restoration of the values that made ours a truly great nation, which made us a people known throughout the world for the defense of all of the great rights documented in those lofty

written principles of our sovereignty. We need to heal the divisions that have so diminished us as a people and as a society for these past 39 years so that we can cease being *a kingdom is divided against itself*. And become once more a kingdom of peace, a kingdom of integrity, a kingdom of unity, and a kingdom of righteousness.