

Defense of the Sanctity of Life

March for Life - Sunday, January 21, 2024.
Ave Maria Catholic Church. Fr. David M Vidal

Last Friday, many thousands of people marched in Washington, DC. It was the 51st annual March for Life. Yesterday, we did the same in our town. After the overturn of Roe v. Wade, why are we still in great need of a March for Life? It is because sadly, abortion is an evil that persists and expands as a plague that destroys people and countries. We need to march because, ultimately, we must change our human hearts and be converted. Our hearts must be reformed. Our hearts must be renewed. Our hearts must learn to love. Our hearts must learn to produce fruits of goodness.

The battle to defend the sanctity of life belongs to all people of good will, but this battle especially belongs to the young. Why? Because this is a fierce battle, and the vitality of the young is needed.

In his first letter, St. John declares: *"I write to you, young people, because you are strong."* (1 Jn 2:13). This is true. Young people are physically strong and quick and mentally fast. In them, memory is fresh, and imagination is alive. Also, the young have great dreams and desires. Young people feel strong, and in many ways, they are strong.

However, are all those good qualities the final reason for their strength? Let us continue reading St. John's first letter, and he will tell us: *"I write to you, young people, because you are strong... and the word of God abides in you"* (1 Jn 2:13-14).

In other words, the Evangelist explains that, ultimately, the foundation of their strength relies on God's word abiding in them. Strength is not a matter of muscles and wit. If the word of God does not abide in us, we are neither strong nor young. If the word of God does not abide in us, we are weak. However, if the word of God dwells in us, we are always young, with the youthfulness and strength that comes from God.

To become strong, a process of education is needed.

The child is not strong. The child needs to grow. The child must become a man or a woman filled with physical, intellectual, and spiritual strength. We all know that childhood is a time of growth.

Our lives with parents and siblings become our first school. Sharing, helping, and forgiving are some of the first lessons we received at home. Then, the larger community of teachers, companions, and friends assist us in our growth. But the words and examples of parents, family, teachers, companions, and friends will have little effect if the young are not determined to undertake the work of his own education.

In other words, our lives cannot be built exclusively “from outside.” Virtue is not imposed. Good morals are not imposed. Goodness, truth, honesty, self-control, purity, generosity, gentleness, compassion, faithfulness, and many other virtues must be built “from within.”

Being a good person is not an external garment. It is not like a suit or a dress that people wear to be dignified. Being a good person requires a much deeper process. Goodness is built “from within.” To be a good person the word of God must abide in us.

In this path of interior growth, one of the fundamental steps is to learn to say “no.”

Perhaps someone may say: “That is easy... I say ‘no’ all the time.” However, to say “no” is not easy. To say “no” to pride, avarice, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth is not easy. It requires humility, patience, determination, and trust in God. Saying “no” to what is evil is not easy. And the difficulty only increases when we hear that in this world, to be successful, we must be fraudulent, or to have something, we must lie to or hurt others. It seems that the evil way should be the way of life.

However, saying “no” to evil is the first step to true growth. And we must walk the walk. Nobody else can accomplish this walk for us. We must learn to say “no” to what is evil.

In this process of self-education of our interior, saying “no” will always be insufficient. Being a good person requires a personal affirmative choice: I desire goodness in my life and, consequently, in others.

In other words, we must learn to say “yes” to what is good. Let us listen to Saint Paul, who encourages us: *“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience . . . And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection,”* (Col 3: 12-14). To say “yes” to what is good is not easy; however, it is not impossible. We must look at Jesus and learn from Him. We must look to Jesus and ask for wisdom and strength. We must fix our eyes on Jesus and show with our lives how beautiful it is to say “yes” to good things!

Therefore:

Against the avarice of those who accumulate worldly richness, we must show that all the things of this world are too small for us because our hearts desire God himself, and the world cannot contain Him.

Against the laugh of those who act against God’s will, we must show that a worldly laugh lasts for a moment; however, the joy that experiences the people of good will remains forever.

Against the pride of those who want to dominate others, we must show a humble heart that looks for glory in a better land.

Against the dishonesty of those who lie and deceive others to satisfy themselves, we must show hunger and thirst for truth that leads us to fulfillment and complete satisfaction.

Against the offenses of those who cannot forgive those from whom they receive evil, we must show compassion and kindness because only goodness overcomes evil.

Against the immorality of those who teach or practice impurity of heart, we must show the beauty that comes from God's friendship, a beauty that the world cannot give, cannot steal, and cannot surpass.

Against the violence of those who sow dissension and division, we must show our peaceful life as followers of the One who came to bring unity in the truth.

Against the anger of those who persecute others because they do good, we must renew our desire to do better because we have not achieved the goal yet, and only those who do good will enjoy the eternal life of the blessed.

There is much to do in the battle for the defense of the sanctity of life! And this battle belongs to the young in Christ. If His word abides in us, we will be strong, and we will always be young.