

*January 22nd marks the 36th anniversary of the Supreme Court's deplorable decision, Roe v. Wade. I have a question for those who insist that the election of our new president assures that Roe v. Wade is now the irreversible law of the land. If the abolitionists had conceded defeat after the Dred Scott decision, would Barack Obama be our president today?*

*The following reflection will help all people of good will to understand why we, like the abolitionists of the 1800s, may never relent in our determination to speak for the most voiceless and innocent of the human family. It is reprinted with the permission of Cardinal Edward Egan, archbishop of New York. - Bishop Victor Galeone*

### **Just Look**

By Cardinal Edward Egan

The picture on this page is an untouched photograph of a being that has been within its mother for 20 weeks. Please do me the favor of looking at it carefully.

Have you any doubt that it is a human being?

If you do not have any such doubt, have you any doubt that it is an innocent human being?

If you have no doubt about this either, have you any doubt that the authorities in a civilized society are duty-bound to protect this innocent human being if anyone were to wish to kill it?

If your answer to this last query is negative, that is, if you have no doubt that the authorities in a civilized society would be duty-bound to protect this innocent human being if someone were to wish to kill it, I would suggest - even insist - that there is not a lot more to be said about the issue of abortion in our society. It is wrong, and it cannot - must not - be tolerated.

But you might protest that all of this is too easy. Why, you might inquire, have I not delved into the opinion of philosophers and theologians about the matter? And even worse: Why have I not raised the usual questions about what a "human being" is, what a "person" is, what it means to be "living," and such?

People who write books and articles about abortion always concern themselves with these kinds of things. Even the justices of the Supreme Court who gave us Roe v. Wade address them. Why do I neglect philosophers and theologians? Why do I not get into defining "human being," "person," "living," and the rest? Because, I respond, I am sound of mind and endowed with a fine set of eyes, into which I do not believe it is well to cast sand. I looked at the photograph, and I have no doubt about what I saw and what are the duties of a civilized society if what I saw is in danger of being killed by someone who wishes to kill it or, if you prefer, someone who "chooses" to kill it. In brief: I looked, and I know what I saw.

But what about the being that has been in its mother for only 15 weeks or only 10? Have you photographs of that too? Yes, I do. However, I hardly think it necessary to show them. For if we agree that the being in the photograph printed on this page is an innocent human being, you have no choice but to admit that it may not be legitimately killed even before 20 weeks unless you can indicate with scientific proof the point in the development of the being before which it was other than an innocent human being and, therefore, available to be legitimately killed. Nor have Aristotle, Aquinas or even the most brilliant embryologists of our era or any other era been able to do so. If there is a time when something less than a human being in a mother morphs into a human being, it is not a time that anyone has ever been able to identify, though many have made guesses.

However, guesses are of no help. A man with a shotgun who decides to shoot a being that he believes may be a human being is properly hauled before a judge. And hopefully, the judge in question knows what a "human being" is and what the implications of someone's wishing to kill it are. The word

"incarceration" comes to mind. However, we must not stop here. The matter becomes even clearer and simpler if you obtain from the National Geographic Society two extraordinary DVDs. One is entitled, *In the Womb* and illustrates in color and in motion the development of one innocent human being within its mother. The other is entitled, *In the Womb - Multiples* and illustrates in color and in motion the development of two innocent human beings - twin boys - within their mother.

If you have ever allowed yourself to wonder, for example, what "living" means, these two DVDs will be a great help. The one innocent human being squirms about, waves its arms, sucks its thumb, smiles broadly and even yawns; and the two innocent human beings do all of that and more: They fight each other. One gives his brother a kick, and the other responds with a sock to the jaw. If you can convince yourself that these beings are something other than innocent and living human beings (perhaps "mere clusters of tissues," as one national newsmagazine suggests), you have a problem far more basic than merely not appreciating the wrongness of abortion. And that problem is - forgive me - self-deceit in a most extreme form.

Adolf Hitler convinced himself and his subjects that Jews and homosexuals were other than human beings. Joseph Stalin did the same as regards Cossacks and Russian aristocrats. And this despite the fact that Hitler and his subjects had seen both Jews and homosexuals with their own eyes, and Stalin and his subjects had seen both Cossacks and Russian aristocrats with theirs. Happily, there are few today who would hesitate to condemn in the roundest terms the self-deceit of Hitler, Stalin or even their subjects to the extent that their subjects could have done something to end the madness and protect living, innocent human beings.

It is high time to stop pretending that we do not know what this nation of ours is allowing - and approving - with the killing each year of more than 1.6 million innocent human beings within their mothers. We know full well that to kill what is clearly seen to be an innocent human being or what cannot be proved to be other than an innocent human being is as wrong as wrong gets. Nor can we honorably cover our shame (1) by appealing to the thoughts of Aristotle or Aquinas on the subject, inasmuch as we are all well aware that their understanding of matters embryological was hopelessly mistaken, (2) by suggesting that "killing" and "choosing to kill" are somehow distinct ethically, morally or criminally, (3) by feigning ignorance of the meaning of "human being," "person," "living," and such, (4) by maintaining that among the acts covered by the right to privacy is the act of killing an innocent human being, and (5) by claiming that the being within the mother is "part" of the mother, so as to sustain the oft-repeated slogan that a mother may kill or authorize the killing of the being within her "because she is free to do as she wishes with her own body."

One day, please God, when the stranglehold on public opinion in the United States has been released by the extremists for whom abortion is the center of their political and moral life, our nation will, in my judgment, look back on what we have been doing to innocent human beings within their mothers as a crime no less heinous than what was approved by the Supreme Court in the "Dred Scott Decision" in the 19th century, and no less heinous than what was perpetrated by Hitler and Stalin in the 20th. There is nothing at all complicated about the utter wrongness of abortion, and making it all seem complicated mitigates that wrongness not at all. On the contrary, it intensifies it.

Do me a favor. Look at the photograph again. Look and decide with honesty and decency what the Lord expects of you and me as the horror of "legalized" abortion continues to erode the honor of our nation. Look, and do not absolve yourself if you refuse to act.

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