

In the great struggle between the *culture of death* and the *civilization of life and love*, we plead, “**Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Joseph, Patrons of the unborn, pray for us!**”

The U.S. Catholic Bishops have stated, “The threat of abortion is our pre-eminent priority

- because it is an attack on life itself,
- because it takes place in the sanctuary of the family and
- because of the number of lives it destroys”

PERSONHOOD

The Critical Assumption of all Human Civilization

What went wrong with Roe vs. Wade and how to make it right

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Nearly 300 million innocent, unborn children have been killed, over the last fifty years, in the USA alone, through elective surgical abortions, elective chemical abortions and through the abortifacient effects of the birth control pill, IUD, Depo Provera patch, morning after pill, etc. This loss of life is greater than the genocides of Hitler, Stalin, Mao tse Tung, Pol Pot, Rwanda, Sudan, all the wars in human history, and all the terrorist attacks throughout the world, combined! This disregard for the value of human life in its early stages has been called, “*the silent holocaust.*” How can this evil be allowed to continue!?! And yet it is continuing and being promoted all around us in such a pervasive way that the late Pope John Paul II called the phenomenon, “*the culture of death.*” The same pope exhorted Americans on more than one occasion to be true to the founding principles of our nation, with the stirring words, “America, Defend Life!” (World Youth Day, Denver, 1993). In responding to this challenge, we pray, **our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Joseph, Patrons of the unborn, pray for us!**

“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.” Wm. Whipple called this sentence, penned by Thomas Jefferson and ratified by the founding fathers of the first 13 colonies of the USA, “*the most potent and consequential words in American history.*” This article will focus on the question of what went wrong in the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. How and why could a majority of Supreme Court justices, of all people, misinterpret this potent and self evident truth, “*all men are created equal,*” and proceed to lift the protection of the law from a whole class of human beings in the interval from their creation to their birth?

Wrong thinking will lead to wrong doing. It’s as simple as that. What was the *wrong thinking* that led to the majority opinion in the Roe vs. Wade decision? In this section I will be passing on some of the nearly verbatim insights of philosophy professor, Fr. Robert Spitzer, SJ, from a teaching he gave in 2002 (cf. his book, Healing the Culture.) It

will be necessary to understand the technical difference between the meaning of *subjective* and *objective* criteria when it comes to defining the culturally significant category of PERSONHOOD.

“Personhood controls Rights. Who is worthy of rights in the world? Persons are! So all you have to do to remove rights is to relegate a human being to the category of non-person or sub-human.” It happened to Terry Schiavo. It happened in the Dred Scott decision, which upheld slavery and in the Roe vs. Wade decision, which legalized abortion. It is happening in a number of assisted suicide court cases. It has happened in all the genocides of the last century. It happens in every *choice to terminate a pregnancy*, a choice made every twenty seconds in the USA.

“Scientifically testable human life is the only *objective* criteria we have for human personhood.” We call the criteria, *objective*, because the evidence is in the **object** being tested. Even at the earliest stages of human life, when the human being is a single cell, created right after the union of male sperm and female egg, we can verify the existence of a complete and unique human genome. We can verify the evidence of life because there are 24 different indicators of metabolism given off even at the single cell stage of development. Putting the tests for life and humanity together we can verify the existence of a unique and genetically complete human life right at its genesis. All that remains is development.

But is the evident very young human being a human person? “In Roe vs. Wade the Supreme Court chose to ignore the only objective criteria for human personhood and to use the *subjective* criteria of **CLARITY** instead. Clarity is not in the thing. Clarity depends on my ability as a subject to perceive or apperceive intelligibility in the thing I am observing.” What seems *clear* to one subject may not seem so clear to another. Clarity is *subjective* and can be influenced by whatever bias or agenda I as an individual subject may have. For instance, If I have been taught that the world is “over populated,” that there are too many poor people and that poor people are having too many babies, then, in my benevolent desire to reduce poverty, I may be biased toward “pragmatic solutions” like birth control, sterilization and legalized abortion on demand, especially for poor people. This is the logic that spawned the International Planned Parenthood birth control and abortion business. This is the logic that continues to spawn a culture of death. If “too many” people are the problem, then the solution would seem to be a strategy that could bring about fewer people. Could Supreme Court justices in 1968 and 1973 have been affected by such a bias? Those were the years when they decided that, first, all the state laws against contraceptive measures and then, all the state laws against abortion, were unconstitutional because they violated a citizen’s so called “right to privacy.” Because of our own blindness and susceptibility to bias and prejudice in our thinking we plead, “**our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Joseph, Patrons of the unborn, pray for us!**” Help us to see that the problem is not “too many people,” but rather our lack of trust in God and our sins that spawn fear, selfishness, greed, injustice, poverty, crime, violence and war.

“Roe vs. Wade was a rights conflict: the liberty rights of the mother vs. the life rights of the unborn child. Mothers are “clearer” than unborn children, therefore the Court decided in favor of the liberty rights of the mother.” This same subjective and deadly logic had been used before with the slavery issue. “In the Supreme Court it was a rights conflict between the property rights of white people and the liberty rights of black people. The Court queried, “are black human beings persons, and hence endowed with rights that must be upheld under the law?” The Court was not sure. They could not subjectively perceive with sufficient clarity whether black human beings were persons. Therefore, they favored the CLEAR property rights of white persons over the unclear liberty rights of black human beings.” Even slave owner, Thomas Jefferson, who wrote, “*all men are created equal*,” was blinded by the prejudices and economic benefits of his time. He did not uphold the unalienable right to liberty of black slaves. Today many of the political leaders and citizens of the USA are blinded to the intrinsic dignity of human life in all its stages of existence, especially in the womb. Because of legal abortion on demand, and all the fear and selfishness, and all the biases of subjectivism, secularism, individualism, relativism, and consumerism which support legal abortion on demand, massive and irreparable harm is being done, not only to unborn children, but also to countless mothers, fathers, marriages, families, communities, and indeed the whole nation and world. We definitely need conversion back to trust in God in order to start thinking and acting rightly as a culture. And so, we plead, “**our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Joseph, Patrons of the unborn, pray for us.**”

Our nation and our world desperately need to adopt what Fr. Spitzer calls, “*The Critical Assumption of all Human Civilization: Every being of human origin, by its very human existence, must be considered a human person and thus deserving of protection and enhancement under the law. Any other assumption risks genocide, social marginalization, socio-economic marginalization, prejudice and bias.*” The secular way of asserting the truth of human dignity is to state, “Human beings/persons have intrinsic and extrinsic dignity, period. A religious and ultimate way of asserting the truth of human dignity can be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. “*God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.*” (Gen.1:27). ..”*He (each human being) is the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake,*”(GS 24:3) *and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God’s own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity.*”(CCC 356).

Since the shift from an objective criteria to a subjective criteria for defining human personhood is one of the ways where the majority of Supreme Court justices went wrong, therefore, adopting the critical assumption of all human civilization is needed in order to set things right. To supplant the culture of death with the civilization of life and love, we must act with Wisdom. We need Heaven’s help and so we continue to pray, “**our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Joseph, Patrons of the unborn, pray for us!**”