

## 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Over the past month the Center for Medical Progress has released several videos of interviews it made while spying on leaders from Planned Parenthood. The videos allege that those who promote and practice abortion are illegally selling fetal tissue and body parts to researchers. Planned Parenthood has apologized for the tone of its representatives but insists that it does not profit from selling the body parts of unborn children.

The videos shine a light on the tragedy of abortion. A woman who chooses abortion may name a variety of reasons. She may say she cannot afford a child, or the timing is bad for her to have one; she may not be happy with her relationship with the child's father; she may be caring for other children; a child might interrupt her ability to go to school; it may interfere with her future plans; she may feel she is not mentally prepared for motherhood; she may have concerns about her own health; she may want a better life for her children than what she can provide at the moment; she may not feel sufficiently mature; she may feel pressure from family or friends; or she may not want to put a child up for adoption. Some mothers probably like the idea that fetal tissue can help scientific research. Women with deep concerns deserve our compassion. But these rationalizations cause mothers to put aside the horrifying thought that they are paying a doctor to kill their own child.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of... existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.... Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law." Ultimate responsibility falls to the women who make this choice, but any of us may promote a culture that shows disregard for human life, especially when we show little care for the elderly, the prisoner, the homeless, or the immigrant; or when we choose violence to solve our problems. When other people don't care about their brothers and sisters, a mother cares less for her child. One motive for protecting human life is to remember what God has done for us, giving us precious life.

In today's first reading, Joshua urged the people to remember what God had done for them. After Moses died, Joshua brought them into the promised land. But he noticed that some people worshiped false gods. At Shechem he gathered the elders, leaders, judges and officers of all the tribes of Israel, and he gave them three choices: the god of their ancestors, the god of the Amorites, or the Lord. The first choice represented past traditions as if nothing new held value. The second choice represented the society in which they lived, as if the world around them provided all they needed. But the Lord had worked marvels for them, bringing them out of slavery through the sea and across the desert into this land. Joshua said, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

We have three choices too. We can choose the violence and hatred of the past. We can choose the false comforts of the present. Or we can follow the God who gave us life. When we protect the lives of helpless, unborn children, we announce to the world, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."