

**10/02/16 ..... 27 C**

-- *How long, O Lord?* That question haunts us so often. Like the prophet, we see violence in our world. We face the threat of terrorism. We take note of evils like human trafficking. And we encounter violations of the sanctity of human life like abortion, euthanasia, and other threats.

-- We wonder when it will all end. Yet we realize that sin has always existed in our world and will continue to do so until Christ comes again to restore all things. We are impatient; we want things made right.

-- With all this happening, we are asked by our diocese this week to pray for all who have been involved in or affected by abortion. Abortion is an evil that has existed for thousands of years and, in American society, has been legal for over 43 years. Yet our society has never been completely comfortable with it, including most who don't want to make it illegal.

-- And for good reason. It violates the sanctity of human life. It goes against the normal instincts of the expectant mother. The Church is right to oppose this violation of human dignity of one who is so small.

-- At the same time, we are called to be understanding and merciful to those who have been involved in a decision to abort a child. As John Paul said in addressing those who had an abortion, *What you did was wrong. But the Church reaches out to you, offering you healing.* [paraphrase]

-- And Pope Francis has acknowledged that the decision to abort a child is often made when a woman feels she has no other option. That may not, in fact, be the case, but it may well seem that way to her.

-- Whatever the circumstances, we as a Church community are called to reach out to her and others affected by her decision. We are to extend God's mercy, just as the Church offers the healing mercy of the sacraments, particularly the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

-- One specific ministry which does this is Project Rachel, which is active in our diocese and has a retreat coming up October 29. Brochures on

Project Rachel are in the vestibule on the new cabinet giving further details, a contact number and website.

-- Often, victims of abortion continue to need support even after having been reconciled to the Church. Often, that support is needed at critical times, such as the day or the anniversary of when that child would have been born.

-- We need to be the face of mercy to them and help them know that they are forgiven by God and supported by their fellow Catholic Christians.

-- *The vision has its time.* I can remember countless times when I've heard people pray for an end to abortion. While that's admirable, history tells us that it's unlikely we'll see a complete end in our lifetimes, though we may be able to reduce them drastically.

-- Meanwhile, we press on for the fulfillment of the vision of an end to violence in our world, especially against the most vulnerable. We do so in hope, even if that vision is only partially fulfilled while we live.

-- And we do so while showing mercy to all who have been caught up in the sin of abortion. For, as we continually need to remember, we are all sinful people in need of God's mercy.

-- Fortunately, God's mercy is abundant. There is no unforgivable sin in God's eyes. May we never regard anyone as beyond the pale of God's mercy, especially those involved in or affected by abortion.

-- We are asked not to be rash or easily condemning. We are called to be patient and faithful—in particular, to be faithful in being a sign of God's mercy to all who need it. For, in the end, we all do!