

March 21, 2023
Platform Speech at Illinois March for Life
Springfield, Illinois
Delivered by Rev. Michael Mohr, Central Illinois District President

Thank you, Anna.

I have to confess, this is a particularly surreal moment for me. Roe v. Wade was first decided by a three judge panel in Texas eleven months before I was born. I am a member of the Roe v. Wade generation, and I have to tell you – to be able to stand here at the first Illinois March for Life post – Roe is something I doubted would ever be achieved in my lifetime. But here we are.

Here we are – a great victory won, but the strife is not yet over. This movement is not simply about laws and legislation and judicial rulings. This movement is about acknowledging the gift of life that God grants. Even a life tormented by sickness and disease and all the other consequences of a fallen and sinful world is a life bought and paid for by the shedding of the Blood of Christ, a life that bears the image of God made perfect in the Incarnate Son of God. And it is to those lives we have been called to be a neighbor.

Roughly one year ago, the majority of politicians in this building behind me/you were crying out what I thought was a cautionary tale. The Dobbs case had been argued before the Supreme Court, but no ruling had yet been announced (or even leaked to the press). “If Roe v. Wade is overturned,” they warned, “we will return to back alley abortions.” Little did I realize at the time they were not giving warnings about unintended consequences, they were announcing their legislative agenda. Uninspected mobile facilities positioned in abandoned lots along the borders of the state staffed by doctors who had their credentials suspended in other states – these back-alley conditions are now the new “standard of care” codified in our laws. The women of this state, the women who travel here from out of state, and the children they carry in their wombs deserve better.

And we can do better. Nearly 100 pregnancy resource centers throughout the state, with more preparing to open. Thousands of volunteers, like you, reflecting the care and mercy we ourselves have received in the forgiveness of Christ. All we need is for the state to let us show this mercy. We plead with God’s servants, those who make, administer, and judge our laws – abandon bills like HB 2463 and SB 1909 which would penalize pregnancy resource centers for showing mercy while not offering the brutal, the cruel, the unthinkable.

We plead with these servants of God in His Left-hand Kingdom – all the while remembering our true foe in this battle is not a politician, nor one political party or the another. Neither is our greatest ally a politician, a political party, or some branch of government. “For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the cosmic rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.” (Ephesians 6:12-13). As this day began, many of us

gathered to be strengthened by God's grace in His Word and prayer, for He is the only one who can change hearts and minds and deliver them from the falsehoods of the Deceiver. While, for various historical and theological reasons, these services needed to be held separately, whether you were just north here at Trinity Lutheran Church, or a couple of miles to the southwest at St. Anthony's Hellenic Greek Orthodox Church, or a half dozen miles to the southeast celebrating mass with Bishop Paprocki out at Sangamon Auditorium, we all joined together in that ancient prayer that finds its roots in the Old Testament plea of the 123rd Psalm and in the New Testament cry of Blind Bartimaeus. As we steel ourselves for this continued battle with the Evil One and pray God's strength be upon us, let us once again take that prayer upon our lips:

O Lord, **have mercy upon us.**

O Christ, **have mercy upon us.**

O Lord, **have mercy upon us.**

And all God's people say, **Amen!**