I have Good News for you! Though we live in a world that is dead and dying, though we live in a world that often chooses death over life, God speaks love and life, hope and healing in His Word. He has made us and He has re-made us alive in Christ. That is why we are here. And that is why we listen to His life-giving Word on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

People God dearly loves, babies, are everywhere! They’re selling Michelin tires. They’re babbling away about e-trading. And they’re even roller skating to rap music to sell Evian water! It’s cute! And cuteness works. But what does it say that we accept babies in advertising, yet discard them like old tires even before they are born?

Babies are everywhere! Hardly a week goes by that the celebrity gossip shows don’t gush over another “tummy popping out,” or about another one of the rich and famous adopting a newborn or a toddler from somewhere in the world. It’s cute! And cuteness works. But what does it say that the tabloids celebrate babies—whether the parents are married or not—and also take it for granted that it’s just as OK—and might even be celebrated—when one of them decides to abort because “who are we to judge another’s decision?”

Which reveals that not all stories have happy endings. Some are sad and disappointing at the least, tragic and shocking in their harshness and their horror. Here is just one example: Former NFL player Rae Carruth is in prison for plotting the murder of his pregnant girlfriend. The hit man was spared the death penalty even though he was found guilty of “using an instrument with intent to kill an unborn child.” The man who fired the gun said, “I couldn’t bring myself to kill the baby. I shot at the top, not through the door [of the car].” And the unborn child, delivered by C-section, survived the violence against his mother.

Today we grieve a deadly tragedy: Thirty-seven years ago—on January 22, of 1973—the United States Supreme Court handed down it’s decision on the case of Roe versus Wade, legalizing abortion-on-demand in these United States of America. [I’m including my story of when this happened. The
2009 Life Sunday Sermon
1 Corinthians 12:27
Theme: Whose Body Is It?
Pastor Mark D. Barz, Pastor, Crown of Life Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas

Proclaimer is encouraged to recall and share his own reflections on how he learned about and responded to Roe v Wade.

I was a junior in high school when Roe v Wade was announced. I sat in my Algebra II / Trigonometry class at St. Johns High School in central Michigan on the morning of January 23. Near the end of the class period, our teacher surprised us when he said, “My wife and I have our family. (I think they had three young daughters.) If we found out she was pregnant again, she would go get an abortion.”

I don’t really remember why or how I knew what had happened the day before. And I certainly didn’t know all that it meant and would change in our country and our culture. But I do remember that only two of my classmates and I—both of them Roman Catholics—spoke up and said, “This isn’t right. Life should be valued and protected, not taken away, not discarded.”

How serious is this holocaust? A conservative estimate is that—in our country alone—almost 52 million unborn children have been killed by legalized abortion in the past 37 years. Who might these children have been? The researcher who could be finding the cure for breast cancer or AIDS or Parkinson’s Disease! The police officer, the soldier, the scientist, the writer, the teacher, the mother, the father, the musician, the artist, the missionary bringing the Good News to those who had never heard of Jesus Christ!

Who were they? They were children denied life after conception. They were grandchildren denied life outside the safety of the womb. They were God’s creation, given bodies and souls, to live in His world and to live in Christ through the gift of His salvation.

And it’s not only Roe v Wade that we grieve today. We grieve the culture of death which surrounds us, the culture that has made “choice” and “freedom” and “privacy” its unholy trinity of false gods. We grieve RU-486 and partial birth abortions. We grieve the rise of infanticide and euthanasia. We grieve political policies and practices which do not value and protect the life of the smallest and most
vulnerable among us. And as we grieve we turn to God’s Word seeking answers to this important
question: Whose Body Is It?

Let’s start with the positive, with the affirmation of God’s wisdom in designing life and God’s
power in creating life. The Psalmist says, “...I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14a).
Ah, what mystery and what marvel. From conception on there is a unique human being. This is not a
potential life but a life filled with potential. All this unborn child needs is time and nourishment—and
protection.

For at only 18 days after conception the tiny heart begins beating. At eight weeks the stomach,
liver, kidneys, and brain are functioning. Distinctive, one-of-a-kind fingerprints are defined. This child is
moving and maturing. The Precious Feet of only ten weeks show little toes already formed and growing.
All the preborn child needs to become a healthy newborn is nourishment and time—and protection. For in
the womb the growing person is safe and protected and completely dependent. He is dependent upon the
nutrients supplied by the mother. She is dependent upon the protection supplied by all of the rest of us—
through our care and our acceptance and our laws.

So whose body is this? See and marvel at what God has done since Adam and Eve first
conceived a child. See and marvel at what God still does! The baby and its mother share nourishment and
oxygen, a common blood supply through the umbilical cord. Waste removal happens through the amazing
placenta even as the growing child “rehearses” the waste disposal process for after its birth. Hear a longer
portion of Psalm 139 in another version: “You are the one who put me together inside my mother’s body,
and I praise You because of the wonderful way You created me… Nothing about me is hidden from
You! I was secretly woven together… with Your own eyes You saw my body being formed” (Psalm: 13-16a Contemporary English Version).

By genetic makeup, this new life is completely unique. No other human being has had or ever
will have the exact combination of genes and chromosomes. No other person’s DNA will ever define the
complex and complicated person that is alive and growing in utero. But here is also a miracle of God:
this isn’t just true of an unborn child, it’s true of the aged and the handicapped though weakened by age or disease, though limited by injury or illness. Each one is God’s creation, each one is wonderfully, uniquely made; each one is still valued and still valuable, unborn or aged, newborn or disabled.

Whose body is it? “It’s My Body! It’s My Choice!” The slogan has been on too many signs held at too many pro-abortion events for too many years. The assertion is this: “You can’t tell me what to do! Because it’s my body, not yours!” But is it truly your body that you’re trying to control? An unborn baby is not a spleen or an appendix to be removed, or even a kidney or liver to be transplanted. An unborn baby lives within its mother and is dependent upon its mother, but is separate from its mother. Yet, the choice can be made to end this precious and fragile life.

For choice has become “god.” (See the notes below on F. Lagard Smith’s book When Choice Becomes God.) And if this is our culture’s “god,” this “god” must be worshiped and served. This appeal to choice has led to the great confusion that a perplexing number of people view abortion as the taking of a human life, yet grant to a woman the “right” to kill this unborn child.

It’s clear there is both confusion and conflict over this simple question. People disagree over who establishes value, who determines personhood, and who exerts control over this unborn life. These are questions that the Body of Christ, and each follower of Christ, can and must answer. And we do so by listening again to God’s Word. Isaiah the prophet writes: “This is what the LORD says – your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: ‘I am the LORD, who has made all things…”’ (Isaiah 44:24a).

Whose body is it? The follower of Christ says, “It belongs to the One who formed it. It is a gift of the One who has made all things.” But our question this morning reveals something more. It reveals that we often live far from the intention God has for us. He designed us to live in relationships with each other and with Him.

So we must confront and confess these sins: separateness and individuality and independence and freedom. These are all sins when they distance us from God and from each other within His family.
And we must confess that they stand behind the sinful choices we make: convenience and control over the unborn or the aged, the weak or the handicapped. Indeed we are also guilty of not wanting the inconvenience of being burdened with a life that we have decided is not of the same value as another, or not valuable enough to others.

Whose body is it? That question leads us to Scripture’s salvation story. The ultimate “crisis pregnancy” occurred when an unmarried virgin is told she will conceive and carry and give birth to the promised Messiah. And hear Mary’s quiet confidence, “I am the Lord’s servant…may it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38).

Know that she willingly accepted shame—for there were certainly those in Nazareth whose tongues wagged about the “trouble” Mary was in. But she accepted this that all the world might know hope! And rejoice that Planned Parenthood wasn’t there to “rescue” Mary from this terrible burden! For here is a great truth—one that we celebrated barely a month ago: Christ takes a human body. Our Lord takes on human life to give us life. Jesus lives like us in every way so that He can fight the battle we could not fight.

For the body carried in Mary’s womb, the body placed in the manger for its cradle, the body seen by shepherds and honored by Magi—this is the body that Christ will offer on the cross. Jesus will give this body over to suffering and death, to torture and humiliation, to whipping and mockery, to crucifixion and entombment. Whose body is it? It is the body of the very Son of God.
And the body sacrificed at Golgotha means forgiveness for every sin against life, every disregard for the unborn or every disregard for the young woman pregnant and alone and desperate or every disregard for the woman or the man who still is burdened—ten or twenty or thirty years later—by choosing abortion over adoption.

Even more, the body raised on the third day means life for the bodies of all who believe in Jesus Christ. Whose body is it? It is the body of the victorious King of Kings now seated at the right hand of the Father and proof and promise that we will live for all eternity with resurrected and glorified bodies.
It’s time to share another Scripture with you. Maybe it’s the one you’ve been expecting all along!

This Word of God is from 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Here the Apostle Paul writes: “If one part [of the Body] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part [of the Body] is honored, every part rejoices with it. …[for] we were all baptized by one Spirit into one Body…” (1 Corinthians 12:26,13a).

Whose body are we? We are the Body of Christ! We don’t live in brokenness, separated from each other, separated from God. The Holy Spirit’s work is to bring us into this marvelous relationship.

In Christ we are connected: first with God, then with each other. We are not independent, but interdependent. We need each other. We rely on each other. We support and care for and encourage each other.

Whose body is it? It is Christ’s body! And because we are the Body of Christ—because we have this connection to our Lord and to each other—we are called to care. This is the Body of Christ. And because we are part of this body we are empowered and equipped to care as those who have been cared for by the One who (as Michael Card sings) cannot love us more and will not love us less.

We are called to care for those who have chosen life over death, providing for and supporting a new mother—whether married of unmarried—and her child. Just as we are called to care for those who have chosen death over life—boldly and lovingly speaking the forgiveness of the cross to those burdened by guilt, that they may rejoice in the freeing grace of God in Christ. We are called to care for those who are weak or defenseless; we are called to care for those who are weary and devalued. We are the Body of Christ. Chosen. Forgiven. Cleansed. Connected. Freed. Called in Christ to serve others, called to affirm life, called to celebrate life, called to protect life, called to share life. Amen
