

[Readings: 1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21; Psalm 16; Galatians 5:1, 13-18; Luke 9:51-62]

WASHINGTON - In response to the Supreme Court of the United States issuing its ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, Chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities issued the following statement:

"This is a historic day in the life of our country, one that stirs our thoughts, emotions and prayers. For nearly fifty years, America has enforced an unjust law that has permitted some to decide whether others can live or die; this policy has resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of preborn children, generations that were denied the right even to be born.

"America was founded on the truth that all men and women are created equal, with God-given rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This truth was grievously denied by the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling, which legalized and normalized the taking of innocent human life. We thank God today that the Court has now overturned this decision. We pray that our elected officials will now enact laws and policies that promote and protect the most vulnerable among us.

"Our first thoughts are with the little ones whose lives have been taken since 1973 – 62 million lost lives. We mourn their loss, and we entrust their souls to God, who loved them from before all ages and who will love them for all eternity. Our hearts are also with every woman and man who has suffered grievously from abortion; we pray for their healing, and we pledge our continued compassion and support. As a Church, we need to serve those who face difficult pregnancies and surround them with love.

"Today's decision is also the fruit of the prayers, sacrifices, and advocacy of countless ordinary Americans from every walk of life.

Over these long years, millions of our fellow citizens have worked together peacefully to educate and persuade their neighbors about the injustice of

abortion, to offer care and counseling to women, and to work for alternatives to abortion, including adoption, foster care, and public policies that truly support families. We share their joy today and we are grateful to them. Their work for the cause of life reflects all that is good in our democracy, and the pro-life movement deserves to be numbered among the great movements for social change and civil rights in our nation's history.

"Now is the time to begin the work of building a post-*Roe* America. It is a time for healing wounds and repairing social divisions; it is a time for reasoned reflection and civil dialogue, and for coming together to build a society and economy that supports marriages and families, and where [every woman has the support](#) and resources she needs to bring her child into this world in love.

"As religious leaders, we pledge ourselves to continue our service to God's great plan of love for the human person, and to work with our fellow citizens to fulfill America's promise to guarantee the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all people." May God's will be done. AMEN!

And now, my homily!

Psychologists refer to people who have what is called "termination issues:" They can't seem to hang up the phone, say goodbye at the door, or leave an email unresponded to. They can't stop talking or even make room in a conversation for the person who's forced to endure the onslaught of their words in person or in the land of Facebook, Tweets, and text messaging. For us or for them, it's not breaking up that's hard to do. It's signing off!

We share the pain of young Elisha, who's minding his own business on the family farm when along comes Elijah, casting his cloak over the boy. This gesture is not made because Elijah thinks Elisha is cold in the field.

Putting your cloak over someone else's shoulder is a sign of passing your authority onto that person. I empower you to continue the mission. Elijah claims Elisha for God's will and plans. Elisha doesn't ask for this assignment. He was just doing his duty as a son, plowing the fields at home, when all heaven breaks loose.

The poor fellow is forced into what a scripture scholar (Rudolf Bultmann) calls the “Moment of Decision.” Everything in life leads up to this one moment. A moment of decision, in Elisha’s case, with no time to think straight. He blurts out his need to kiss Mom and Dad goodbye. This is an admirable and perfectly understandable expression of love and loyalty. There’s nothing out of proportion about his request. But both the disciple and the prophet have to put their divine call in perspective of earthly things. If this farm boy can’t distinguish between his earthly parents and God Almighty, he’s got some learning to do!

We who experience “termination issues” in every doorway of life can’t help but feel how harsh that is. Why does Elisha have to leave right this minute? And is it strictly necessary to kill and sacrifice off the oxen – part of his apparently very rich family’s income and estate, and surrender all ties to his past life and dreams? Yet he leaves all behind to follow Elijah eventually to condemn the activity of the government of that time and to suffer the persecution that would follow. We can do no less in this time and in this place.

Needless to say, by the time we get to today’s Gospel, we’re primed for and expecting resistance. Once more, Jesus accepts no excuses or delays when He issues His invitation: “Follow me.”

It’s more of a command than a suggestion. The person invited can refuse to comply; sadly, most of them do. They all express reasonable objections. Let me establish myself in my profession and put something aside for my family. Let me take care of my parents until their old age and death. But the message is clear: The kingdom won’t wait. In one sense, Jesus is saying: turn your back on your past life, on your life of sin and selfishness, and come and follow me.

Yes, show respect and concern for your parents and for your family, but make your good-byes, forsake your former way of life, and come and follow Me.

Have you ever had such a “Moment of Decision” when you had to make a life-changing decision? Mine was when the Lord confirmed my discernment to enter the seminary and to become a priest. I haven’t looked back since. And it’s been the best choice God ever made for me!

A disciple must know when it's time to GO and time to GROW. A true disciple doesn't do everything his or her way; their task is to FOLLOW Jesus, not to write the script of His mission. What is discipleship? "Discipleship" means "student," from the Latin *discipulus*, and originally it described how the Lord was Israel's ultimate teacher through the instructive power of the Law.

In the ancient world, disciples lived with their teachers until they were ready to become rabbis or prophets themselves. This is the concept of modern day seminaries and houses of formation for men and women. So it was startling when Jesus comes along and makes immediate disciples of His followers.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of Jesus' invitation to discipleship was that it took place during the ordinary events of life: at a fisherman's boat, at a tax man's table. Not in a church or temple. It requires an immediate response and then deepens "along the way" with Jesus, toward a radically new life.

Today's Responsorial Psalm describes the challenge perfectly: to "set the Lord ever before me." And St. Paul calls us today to a radical love for ourselves and for one another that begins with God and flows out into all of our relationships. To love one another at the same time as we love ourselves. "The flesh" means anything that draws us away from God: jealousy, anger, selfishness, addiction, quarreling, dissension and inappropriate desires.

Three questions for you today to consider:

*How is your Christian discipleship lived out in your relationships? What relationships are toxic, deadly, leading you away from God, and which relationships are healthy, a life-giving reflection of your relationship with God?*

*Where is the Lord leading you where you would rather not go? What are the obstacles that are distracting you and keeping you from going in that direction? Is it fear of thinking outside the box? Is it fear of the transition? It's not the change that we fear most, it's the process of transition.*

Finally, *where can you go to find the help you will need to get to where the Lord wants you?* I'm here. The parish staff is here. God's Word is available. So are His Sacraments. You have all the tools you need to get to where God wants you.

So, leave all things behind, or at least give them the proper priority, and come and follow HIM – in your relationships, in the new places God wants to lead you, and in the thrilling adventure of the journey. AMEN!