

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CHURCH? It was a cold winter morning in 1991 and I had just finished saying the 6:45 Mass at my first parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scarsdale, New York. As I was taking off my vestments, a woman came into the Sacristy and suddenly started sobbing and crying. I tried to calm her down but she really was hysterical. When she quieted down a bit, I asked her, "Did I say something that upset you?" She nodded yes. "It was in the petitions" she said. Because at that hour of the morning I am sometimes on "Automatic Pilot" I did not exactly remember what was read that made this lady, a daily Mass goer, so very upset. I got the petition book and started reading them and the prayer that hurt this lady so much was one that stated, "For those who have committed the horrible sin of abortion that they may come to recognize the harm they have caused and the damage they have done" (or something to that effect.) The woman cried out, "What you just read is what's so wrong with the Church!" I tried to calm the lady down a bit and after a few minutes I discovered that there was a reason for her outburst. After chatting with her for sometime, I discovered that her daughter had indeed had an abortion. She, the mother was concerned that her daughter was condemned to hell. I tried to explain to her that if the daughter was truly repentant she would not suffer eternal punishment despite the sin. It is true to say that we cannot judge anyone in this life. All judgement is in the hands of Almighty God and he alone knows the secrets of the heart. That being said, of course, there are some sins that are particularly grievous and abortion is one of them. The Catechism of the Church tells us: "Since the First Century, the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable." Often times, it's not so much "What's wrong with the Church" so much but rather with ourselves when we make bad, sinful choices like abortion. This past Friday, January 22nd, we commemorated the forty second anniversary of the infamous 1973 Supreme Court decision Roe VS. Wade. Some of our parishioners headed down to Washington, D.C. for the March for Life. This decision was a moral tragedy for our country. Since January 22, 1973, 56 million legal abortions have occurred in our country. What a tragedy for a nation that has enshrined that basic right to life in our Declaration of Independence. The late Mother Teresa said, "The greatest destroyer of peace is abortion." When I thought about that poor lady crying in Church after her daughter's abortion, I think that Mother Teresa was on to something. Abortion has many bad and disturbing effects for the mother and for the immediate family as well. The Church, in her effort to bring souls to God desires not to condemn but rather to help and to heal. The good news is that no woman needs to make the decision to abort. For instance, there are many maternity services and crisis pregnancy centers available in the Archdiocese of New York, Right here on Staten Island, the Crossroad Foundation does wonderful work with those facing unplanned pregnancies. Also, the Church provides services for mothers who have had abortions for their healing and spiritual health. This week, let us pray in a special way for our young people that as the years go by, they might always make the right choices-most especially the choice for life!

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Jerome