



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

# Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics



## Profiles in Courage

**By Msgr. Ellsworth R. Walden, Pastor, St. Patrick Smithtown**

Profiles in Courage was a book written by John F. Kennedy in 1955, five years before he was elected president in 1960. In his book he spoke about eight people who were unsung heroes at different points in our nation's history. We call to mind the celebration of the feast of the Passion of John the Baptist, a well-known saint and true man of faith. He had the courage to live and speak the truth. Some of the lines from the Gospel for that day (Mark 6:17-29) said, "Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak, he was very much perplexed, yet liked to listen to him." Sadly, when Herod was given an opportunity to see the light of truth, he closed his eyes and had John beheaded because of a promise he made to give his wife's daughter anything she wanted.



In the Gospel of Luke (14:25-33), Jesus challenges us to see how seriously we take Him and how much He is a part of our lives and we are a part of His life. **To follow Him and to be part of His life is to have the courage to sacrifice, forgive, apologize, seek and live the truth and to love no matter what.** Herod refused to be guided by anyone but himself and sought to control others who opposed him, and as result gave in to sinfulness. Herod has his successors and supporters in today's world. **We see them whenever truth is denied and evil defended.** We are grappling with many issues at this time in our national history. How do we deal with sex change operations for children, same sex marriages, people seeking to enter our country illegally, and abortion? The question is not only how to see the truth, but also how to live it out. **Abortion is the key issue.** Once we can legally take the lives of the defenseless, everything and everyone else is fair game.

Where do we fit in with all this? Yes, we can feel powerless. Jesus had many opponents and on Good Friday they thought they were victorious. But they were not. Jesus rose and shared His power, life, and Holy Spirit with those who took Him seriously and welcomed Him into their lives. **To take our faith and Jesus seriously is to believe with all our heart, mind, and soul that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.** Public elections and political agendas are not the source of truth. History is full of misguided regimes and citizens that wreaked havoc, death, and destruction. Abortion is presented by its supporters as a woman's choice and it certainly is. **Human choices lead to virtue or sinfulness.**

In our nation today we have too many elected officials and their supporters walking in the footsteps of Herod, taking human life to erase the consequence of sexual activity that was not planned or sought. In the book Essentials of Spiritual Writings by Ronald Rolheiser there are these very pertinent words; “To be entirely voiceless, as are the unborn, is to be exceedingly vulnerable and in the ever present danger of being decertified right out of existence. That is one of the systemic issues underlying abortion. **There is another one more important. We live in a system, a cultural one, within which it is acceptable for men and women to have sex with each other even though they are in no way committed to each other and who do not wish to have children with each other.** Our culture had chosen to dissociate sex from marriage and procreation. **In such a system where sex is an extension of dating, abortion will always happen. Abortion can only stop if the system changes.** This does not excuse abortion, but it does explain it.”

We do have a voice and more importantly a life, a life that is a gift from our parents and God Himself. There are no human beings more in need of our love, defense, and support than children in the womb and their mothers. How good it is to see the light and to pray for them and to pray for the courage to rise above popular opinion and political power and speak up for those most in need of our love and support. **May we have the courage and determination of St. John the Baptist who lived and spoke the truth. May we be courageous enough to see through the human ability to do evil as Herod did for the sake of avoiding change, embarrassment, and confrontation.** May we know the attraction of Jesus’ words and live them with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. All you innocent souls in heaven: Pray For Us.

I close with the prayer from the Mass of the Passion of St. John the Baptist.

*O God, who willed that St. John the Baptist should go ahead of your Son both in his birth and in his death, grant that, as he died a martyr for truth and justice, we, too, may fight hard for the confession of what you teach. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.*