

Preaching on Abortion

By Frank Pavone

Introduction

There is a lot of pain in our midst...pain regarding the tragedy of abortion. We as pastors share in that pain. We are also called to address it. Dealing with it is an essential aspect of our call to serve the needs of our people.

Some of the pain of abortion comes from having been involved in one. Some of the pain, on the other hand, comes from simply knowing it happens. Most people understand abortion is wrong. But because they know that doing something to stop it will involve sacrifices they would rather not make, they don't really make an effort to learn more about it. Facing abortion directly, after all, will make them feel worse about not doing something about it.

In the midst of this dilemma, we are called and sent as pastors.

We are called to bring hope, reconciliation, and healing to those who have procured or cooperated in abortions. We are also called to encourage and equip our people to make positive changes in society, so that respect and protection for the lives of our unborn brothers and sisters will flourish.

A pastor is a minister of truth and compassion, two realities which, far from being contrary to each other, are essential aspects of each other. God, after all, is both Truth and Compassion itself, and He is One.

To fail in compassion for the weakness and suffering of our people is to fail to reflect the truth about their lives and the truth about God's love.

To fail to bear witness to the truth, in all its clarity and vigor, is to fail in compassion, because people have a need for truth. It is as necessary for the growth of the spirit as food is for the body.

People are grateful to hear the truth spoken in compassion. They are grateful when we, their pastors, can help them deal intelligently and courageously with the pain that abortion brings to all of us. We pray that these pages will help you do precisely that.

Love Them Both: How to Preach About Abortion

"Pastor, I came into this Church this morning being totally pro-abortion, and the sermon changed my views completely."

"Pastor, I had an abortion, and sometimes it hurts to hear about it, but please keep up the preaching! I gladly endure whatever pain I have, because I know the sermons will keep some other woman from ever going through what I have gone through from the abortion itself."

"Hi! I'd like to begin this letter by thanking you for last week's sermon. I was deeply moved and so was my younger brother. I'm 17 and he's 12. We did not fully understand what goes on in abortion till your sermon. We both would like to get on the mailing lists of pro-life organizations."

How do we preach on abortion? What are we trying to accomplish? How do we awaken our people to this immense evil? How do we handle reactions of anger and disagreement?

Where are our people on abortion?

A good place to start answering these questions is to examine the attitudes of the American people on abortion. Sometimes we hear that "Most Americans are pro-choice." The statement is meaningless until the term "pro-choice" is defined. A more helpful way to understand what most people think is to ask them the specific circumstances in which they think abortion should be legal.

That is precisely what was done in a survey conducted by the Wirthlin Group in June of 1999. About 11% said they thought abortion should be prohibited in all circumstances, and about the same number said it should be legal at any time during pregnancy, and for any reason. There were four other positions. Most of the remaining people said abortion should be legal only in cases of rape, incest, or danger to the mother's life, with a somewhat smaller number saying it should only be legal to save the mother's life. The other two positions were that it should be legal for any reason but not after the first three months of pregnancy, and that it should be legal for any reason but not after the first six months of pregnancy.

By the admission of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the abortions in cases of rape or incest account for about 1% of the total abortions. By the testimony of many medical experts, furthermore, abortion is never necessary to save a mother's life.

Conclusion? Most Americans oppose 99% of the abortions taking place, while the current policy on abortion (available through all nine months) is supported by about 11% of the public.

We likewise see the curious phenomenon that among the majority of Americans who would oppose most abortions but permit some, there is a growing number of those who are willing to admit that the abortions they would consider justified are the killing of human beings. In a 1989 Los Angeles Times poll, in fact, 57% called abortion "murder," including one-fourth of those who also said they "generally favored abortion." In 1998, a CBS/NY Times poll indicated that some 50% of the respondents were willing to call abortion "murder," yet one-third of those people said it is sometimes the best course of action for the woman to take.

What is going on here? Why are there so many abortions when most people oppose them and even admit what they are?

First of all, people have gotten the message from the pro-life movement that abortion kills a baby. They have also gotten the message from the abortion-rights side that sometimes abortion benefits women, who should not be deprived of the benefit. Having accepted both messages, the majority of Americans belong to the "conflicted middle." Where this group ultimately goes is where America will ultimately go on abortion.

The other phenomenon at work is denial fueled by pain. There are more each day who are directly involved in an abortion decision, and are therefore at least initially not eager to get involved in an effort to either expose what it is or stop it.

There is an even larger number, however, whose pain over abortion is not because of direct personal involvement, but because of a dilemma that was best described by one who said, "*When people know enough to realize that to learn a little more will involve some risk, it is amazing to see how little they want to learn.*" People know abortion is happening, but also realize that if they look at it too directly, they will not be able to live at peace with themselves unless they start to do something to stop it. At the same time, they know that if they try to stop it, there will be a price to pay. They may lose friends or face other kinds of opposition. They don't want to make the sacrifice necessary to confront injustice. What, then, is their solution to this dilemma? Ignore the problem altogether. Denial protects them from the pain of the situation. This is why some people

become angry when the topic of abortion is raised. They were succeeding in ignoring it and someone brought it to the surface.

What Do We Need to Convince People of?

Given the attitudes people have on abortion, and the dominant images they have about the pro-life effort, we can begin to trace several themes we need to communicate as we preach on this topic.

People need to know that we are on their side. A discussion of abortion, whether in private or public, should acknowledge the pain that most of us feel about it, whether we describe ourselves as pro-life or not. The psychological attitude to take and to convey is, "You are not my enemy. We are in this painful situation together, and need to help each other out of it." The individual who may react angrily to a pro-life message is best approached with a frame of mind similar to which we care for those afflicted by personal disasters. We are dealing with good people who have pain, not with enemies.

People need to know that to be pro-life is to be pro-woman. The difference between "pro-life" and "pro-choice" is not that pro-lifers love the baby and pro-choicers love the woman. The difference is that the "pro-choice" message says you can separate the two and the pro-life message says you cannot. Pro-lifers are criticized for being "fetus-lovers" who are insensitive to women. But one cannot, and pro-lifers do not, love the child without loving the mother. Abortion defenders claim they are loving women, even as they admit they are killing their children. But one cannot love the woman without loving the child. Nor can one harm the child without harming the mother.

The message must be clear that to be pro-life means to be pro-woman, and that the challenge the pro-life movement gives to society is, "Why can't we love them both?" One reason why many who think abortion is wrong will not actively oppose it is that they think they have to make a choice between defending the rights of the baby or those of the mother, or that they have to consider the baby as more important than the mother. But the authentic pro-life message is a message of equality. It is a challenge to *expand* the circle of our love, welcome, and protection. This insight helps resolve the conflict of the "conflicted middle" who see the evil of abortion but think it benefits women.

People need to know that to oppose abortion does not mean to oppose those who have them. An aspect of the pro-woman theme of our pro-life preaching is the healing and forgiveness the church and the pro-life movement offer to those who have been involved in abortion. In most of my sermons, I mention the real case of a woman who had 24 abortions, and proclaim that even for her, the doors of the church are open!

The church has the perfect spiritual and psychological balance necessary for those who have been involved in an abortion. The last thing such a person needs to hear is, "What you did is no big deal." The nature of post-abortion grief is that the individual involved in the abortion has begun to realize precisely what a big deal it was! Now this person needs someone to tell her that she should not feel silly for feeling sad, that there is indeed reason for the grief in her heart, and that what her heart is telling her is true: her child was killed. A great disservice was done both to her and her child when someone convinced her that the abortion would be "no big deal." Accepting that line was a major act of denial. Healing now begins when she breaks out of denial and calls the evil what it is. The clear preaching of the church about abortion helps her to do this.

At the same time, the other line she does not need to hear is, "You are rejected; there is no hope." As she realizes the evil that has occurred, she will be tempted to say this to herself. The church, however, contradicts that despair with the clear message of forgiveness. The church accompanies all who have been involved in abortion, whether the mother, Pastor, grandparents, or even the abortion provider, to the forgiveness and healing Christ offers.

Those in the pain of abortion are not helped by silence. Some refrain from preaching about abortion out of the sincere motive of not hurting women who have had abortions. Yet that silence does not interpret itself. The person grieving over abortion can infer from our silence that we do not know her pain, or that we do not care, or that there is no hope. None of this is true. By our clear and compassionate sermons we can break through the silence which led her to this disastrous choice in the first place.

People need to know that abortion is their business. The key challenge in presenting our people with the abortion issue is not so much convincing them that it is wrong, but rather convincing them that it is *any of their business*. Abortion defenders will say, "If you are against abortion, fine...don't have one. But leave the rest of us alone to exercise our own beliefs and make our own choices." Many people who oppose abortion will therefore lament it, but will feel out of place trying to stop it. They see it as wrong, but as a private wrong, with which it is *none of their business* to interfere.

One of the key tasks necessary here is to de-isolate the issue. People understand that we have to intervene to help the poor, the AIDS victim, the drug addict, the victim of crime and war. Even if we do not know their names, or have never seen the faces of these victims, we know it is our business to help them. We do not hear people say, "I would never abuse my child, but if the other person wants to do so, that's her choice." The reason people do not say that is that they realize that *some choices have victims*. When somebody's choice destroys or threatens somebody else's life, that's everyone's business. It is, after all, the business of love, which intervenes to save our brothers and sisters in need. There, precisely, is the reason it is both our business and our privilege to work to stop abortions.

People need to know that there is something they can do to stop abortion. All of the above is not yet enough. Many oppose abortion but do not think anything can be done. If we awaken people to the evil but do not guide their response, they will either end up depressed or perhaps act irresponsibly. The problem is not that there is nothing that can be done, but that there are not enough people doing the perfectly legal, peaceful and effective activities they can do to end abortion. Presenting such options in the sermon, and following up on them through well-organized parish respect life programs, will overcome another obstacle to the involvement of many in this cause: they think of the pro-life movement as an extreme and fanatical movement characterized by activities they want nothing to do with.

How Do We Convey All This in 10 Minutes? - Three Elements for a Pro-Life Message.

A very convincing sermon can be given in ten minutes conveying the points mentioned above and incorporating the strategic elements I have explained.

The basic message structure I have used around the nation consists, in conjunction with the readings, of three major points in the following order:

1. *There are alternatives to abortion.* Those who procure abortions do not do so because of "freedom of choice," but rather because they feel they have no freedom and no choice. Many are "pro-choice" not because they like abortion but because they ask, "How can the woman live without it?" The good news is that the church and pro-life movement are providing better choices than abortion, and that a wide range of help is available for anyone who needs it. Thousands of helping centers provide financial assistance, medical services, legal advice, counseling, a place to live, jobs, education, and assistance to keep the child or to place the child for adoption. People at services can be asked to take a handout which has phone numbers of abortion-alternatives which they can pass on to those who might need them. It is amazing to see how many people who know that the church opposes abortion are unaware of the church's willingness to provide alternatives. This makes them feel good about being a Christian and about helping the pro-life movement. By mentioning the point about

alternatives first, a major objection is tackled before it arises: "What are you who oppose abortion going to do to help the woman who needs it?"

2. Stress that God offers forgiveness and healing after abortion. This is critical, because so many feel they cannot be forgiven. If all the abortions ended tomorrow, the mission of healing will have only begun. The hope of mercy, furthermore, prevents additional abortions, since there are significant psychological dynamics whereby despair leads to repeat abortions. (Some 46% of abortions in America are repeat abortions.) Furthermore, many hesitate to become active in the pro-life movement because they think that to oppose abortion means to oppose those who have had them, and they do not want to compromise their relationship with their sister, cousin, or friend. If they see that being pro-life means embracing these women with forgiveness, they may be more inclined to join the effort. There is a National Office for Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing at 1-800-5-WE-CARE. (also see the enclosed list of websites)
3. Help people to see through the slogans which make tolerance of abortion seem so reasonable. The term "Pro-choice," for example, fails to point to what is chosen, and would never be applied to child abuse or violent crime. Some choices have victims, including the choice of abortion. "Safe and legal abortion" is a slogan which misleads people into thinking that if it is legal, it must be safe, and to keep it safe we need to keep it legal. Yet the abortion industry is the most unregulated surgical industry in the nation, and regularly destroys the health and lives of the women who procure it in legal facilities. Also focus on some basic facts that most people do not know: there is an abortion every 20 seconds in America; it is legal and happens through all nine months of pregnancy; less than 1% occur because of rape or incest.

The practical follow-up to the sermon is a pro-life handout or bulletin insert.

Love the Angry

A few will react angrily no matter how abortion is spoken about. In all my preaching on abortion, however, I can still count on one hand the number of those who came to me angry because of a pro-life sermon. The best way to approach them, using the attitude described earlier, is to gently ask them questions so as to draw out of them the cause for their anger and help them think about it. I invite them to sit down in an out-of-the-way place to talk calmly. Some will do that, others will leave. But it is much harder to criticize or be angry with someone who wants to *listen* to you than with someone who either lectures you or responds with anger as well. Let them know that you are listening, that you know their pain, and that the message of respect for life which you will steadfastly preach also says that their life is precious, too, no matter what they disagree with.

Theological Considerations

Do justice!

The prophecies of Christ are heavily linked with the word "justice." Psalm 72 declares, "Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace till the moon be no more," and then specifies what that justice entails: "He shall rescue the poor man when he has no one to help him.... From fraud and violence he shall redeem them, and precious shall their blood be in his sight" (v. 7, 12, 14). "Justice" refers to an act of intervention for the defenseless. God does it for His people, and His people must do it for one another. If they don't, worship of God is pointless. This is brought out forcefully through the prophet Amos, when God says, "I hate, I spurn

your feasts, I take no pleasure in your solemnities.... Away with your noisy songs! I will not listen to the melodies of your harps. But if you would offer me holocausts, then let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailing stream" (Amos 5:21, 23-24. See also Isaiah 1:10-17).

Christ preaches and acts in the name of justice, declaring that the Spirit of the Lord has anointed Him to free the oppressed (Luke 4:18 from Is. 61). In His ministry, Christ seeks out those whom society oppresses and rejects: the poor, the lepers, the lunatics, the tax collectors and sinners, and the children whom even His apostles considered troublesome.

His justice, ultimately, is "to undo the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Those works, as Christ declared, are lies and murder (see John 8:44; Psalm 72 said "fraud and violence"). Nowhere is the alliance between lying and murdering more clear than in the abortion industry. Women are told their child is a "blob of tissue." They are told the abortion procedure is "safe," whereas in truth it carries untold burdens of physical and mental anguish. The pro-abortion lies are an echo of the original lie told to the first woman, "You certainly will not die" (Gen. 3:4b). Nowhere besides the abortion mills are there larger numbers of more defenseless people crying out for our intervention. A man of Christ must intervene; a pastor must "make justice his aim" (see Is. 1:17).

There is a story from the days of the Nazi atrocities that tells of a church along a road where the trains passed, carrying Jews to execution. When they passed the church on Sunday mornings, they would cry out in the hope that the worshipers would hear their cries and rescue them. The noise of the wailing prompted members of the congregation to ask the pastor, "What are we to do about this disturbance to our worship?" The pastor paused and then said, "Tell the people to sing a little louder." This sad temptation to avoid the distraction of human lives in danger can surface again today for Christians who may think they are too busy with other things to worry about the abortion issue...too busy to worry about justice.

Dr. Bernard Nathanson was one of the engineers of the abortion-rights movement in this country. He performed tens of thousands of abortions. He is now one of its leading spokespersons for life. Some years ago I attended a talk he gave to pastors. After recounting to us how he and his colleagues launched the abortion industry, he looked at us and said, "We would never have gotten away with what we did if you had been united, purposeful, and strong."

Sociological Considerations

How Often?

Some clergy ask how often they should preach on abortion.

One way to approach this question would be to ask yourself what you would do if a tragedy in our country were claiming the lives of 4000 two-year-old children every day. How often would we bring it up in our preaching?

Whatever our answer, we should consider that abortion has the same effect. The victims are simply younger.

Preaching to the Choir

An analysis of the opinions of Americans on abortion reveals that one of the most consistent indicators of a person's position on abortion is the regularity of his or her Sunday worship. The more consistently one attends Church, in any denomination, the more likely that person is to be opposed to abortion.

To some pastors, this might suggest that we don't need to "preach to the choir." This was the view expressed to me by one woman in the large parish I served in the city of New York. She said to me one Sunday, "About all this preaching on abortion, Pastor... We're not the ones who need to hear it. It's all the people out there, they need to hear it!" "Well then," I told her, "Go tell them!" We do not simply preach about abortion because our people do not know about it, but rather because they do. The fact that they do makes them the most likely group to do something about it. When we say "Go in peace," we are giving them a commission, as the Lord gave the apostles, to take the grace and truth they have received at Mass into the world which also needs it so much.

Pastors are called to inspire and equip the laity to exercise their role in the evangelization of the family, the world of business, the realm of politics, the domain of the media, and countless other arenas. "Choirs" gather regularly for choir practice. With a constant barrage of pro-choice propaganda all around them, the faithful need to be constantly nourished with the Gospel of Life.

We should not hesitate, therefore, to preach to the choir. Such preaching equips them to sing their song to the rest of the world.

Speaking to Children about Abortion

At the start of the message, I asked for a volunteer from among the youngest, smallest members of the congregation. Sharon, who was about six, came forward. I had her stand next to me facing the people and asked her, "Sharon, are there people out there who are bigger than you?" "Yes!" she exclaimed. "Are there people out there who are older than you?" "Yes!" she exclaimed. "Are there people out there who are stronger than you?" "Yes!" she exclaimed. "Are there people out there who are more important than you?" "No!" she declared, with even more conviction in her voice. All the other children understood the same thing.

And thus they understood the key problem in the abortion tragedy. Abortion builds on the lie that the smallest and weakest among us have less value and can even be discarded.

Teaching children about abortion is not as difficult as many think. Children are particularly receptive to the message of equality of all people, and to the truth that might does not make right. They have a keen sense of justice and fairness. They know what it means to need protection from dangers they can neither withstand nor understand. They know what a baby is, and they know it is wrong to kill a baby.

Furthermore, they have not been around long enough to practice the mental gymnastics and exercises in denial that are necessary for developing and maintaining a pro-choice position.

It is not necessary to teach children the details of reproduction before they learn that abortion is a bad thing. The basis for teaching about abortion is not the reproductive system, but the dignity and worth of every human person, whether that person is big or small, young or old, healthy or sick, wanted or unwanted, convenient or inconvenient.

The basis for teaching young people about abortion is the same basis on which we teach that the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" applies to any other category of people.

Some may be afraid to use the word "abortion" with children, reasoning that as someone once told me, "they don't understand all the aspects of it." Let's face it -- nobody does. We do not aim to teach them "all the aspects." The key point with children is that when they hear the word "abortion," they know it is something bad, something that kills, something to be avoided. Education is not just concepts. We influence children not only in how they think about abortion, but in how they feel about it. They should be trained to reject it, and to see it as a part of the list of injustices and evils in the world rather than part of the list of rights, freedoms, and choices.

Some express a concern that children will be traumatized if we tell them that abortion kills babies. I once sat in on a staff meeting at which a proposal was made to set up a sign on parish property that said, "Abortion Kills Children." The staff voted down the proposal on the basis that it would give nightmares to the school children who would see it. A few days later I was in that same school, and in the corridor of the first and second grade students I saw posters on the wall, made by the students themselves. The posters had skeletons coming up from the grave, people falling off an abyss, and various other nightmare scenes, with the message: "DRUGS KILL." "SAYING YES TO DRUGS IS LIKE SAYING YES TO MR. DEATH."

Isn't it curious how selective we can sometimes be about which messages we think will frighten our children...

The pro-life message will not harm our children. What will harm them, however, is the "pro-choice" mentality, which will train them to think that human life is a disposable item, and which, if unchallenged, may lead them to an abortion mill someday.

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America has a television commercial which says, "The perfect time to talk to your child about using marijuana is when you think he's too young to talk about using marijuana. Talk to your child before someone else does." Abortion is a clear parallel. To a parent who once objected to my pro-life preaching because her children were present, I gently pointed out to them that I share her concern for her children's welfare. I then told her that it is better that they hear about abortion from me, in the presence of their parents who can discuss their questions and calm their fears, than if they hear about abortion from pro-choice people who will tell them the false and dangerous lie that abortion is "no big deal." Worse yet, of course, is if the first time they hear anything substantial about abortion is from the "counselor" who is trying to sell them one.

Parents are the primary educators of their children. This requires that pastors and other educators cooperate closely with them. It does not mean, however, that either the parents or other educators have the right to keep their children from the truth. In one instance when I spoke to seventh graders about how abortion harms women, one set of parents objected because I had not received their permission to bring up the topic in class. I assured them that I had no intention of bypassing their parental authority and that, in fact, I welcomed their input. I pointed out that people differ in their judgment of which matters require special parental approval and which do not. I then invited them to be at least equally upset over the fact that their daughter can actually obtain an abortion and be harmed by it without their knowledge or consent, as they were upset that their daughter had heard about abortion and its harmful effects without their knowledge or consent. Public health records in New York State have shown as many as 231 abortions on thirteen-year-old girls in one year.

I know of another case in which parental permission was obtained for all the students in the class, except one, to see a photo of an aborted baby. After school the student whose parents had denied permission insisted that her friend let her see the picture. On returning home she passionately challenged her mom, "Why did you not want me to see what is really happening to these babies! Why was I not allowed to see the truth?"

It is particularly appropriate that children share our concern about abortion. After all, they are closer in age to those who are being killed. Furthermore, they were considered "non-persons" before the law during the first nine months of their existence! If I were born after the Roe vs. Wade decision, I would take that as a personal insult! What loss today's children have sustained from abortion! Those aborted would have been their classmates, their friends, their husbands and wives! Psychological research is being done on the impact of this tragedy on those whose lives might have been taken, had they not been "wanted." The International Institute for Pregnancy Loss and Child Abuse Research and Recovery has identified ten types of "abortion survivors" and has published evidence of how damaging it is for a child to grow up in a society in which he/she could have been aborted.

I once spoke at a cemetery service at a grave containing the aborted bodies of several hundred babies. At the end of the service, each person present placed a rose on the grave and departed. Most people missed the scene at the very end. A very young girl, just able to walk, took a rose to the grave by herself and placed it there. She was, indeed, closest to her brothers and sisters in that grave. The youngest had compassion on her peers, who might have seen the sun that day as she did.

Children will respond actively to the pro-life message, as did the two who wrote me and said, "Hi, I'd like to begin this letter by thanking you for last week's sermon. I was deeply moved and so was my younger brother. Although we are both young, I'm 17 and he's 12, we've been taught how precious life is. But we did not fully understand what goes on in abortion till your sermon... We both want to get on the mailing lists of pro-life organizations."

Children particularly like to wear the Precious Feet pin, showing the exact size and shape of a baby's feet at 10 weeks after conception. It was a child's idea to put those feet on top of pink and blue ribbons. A major pro-life organization then made the combination into a pin!

A group of summer campers I once served, ages 8 to 10, sent a joint letter to the local paper to speak up for preborn children.

"Let the children come to me," the Lord declares. Let them come to His church; let them come to us, that we may love them and teach them the dignity and greatness of all human life.

Are You Too Old to Save a Life?

People beyond childbearing age may tell us, "Abortion is not my problem--I'm too old for that!"

While such people may be too old to have a child, they are never too old to love one, never too old to save one. They are therefore never too old to be concerned about abortion. By our active concern, any one of us can save the life of a baby scheduled to die. To try to save our youngest brothers and sisters is an expression of the love we are bound to for all our lives.

Parents and grandparents, furthermore, have a crucial, sometimes decisive role in the attitudes of their children and grandchildren toward abortion. Do they pass on a concern for life? Do they convey compassion, so that if their daughter or granddaughter were to become pregnant, she would know she could turn to them for understanding, rather than turn to the abortionist?

Despite age, people can continue to make their voices heard in arenas of public opinion and political process. Let nobody say they are too old to be concerned about abortion. As long as we possess life, we have the duty to defend life.

Concrete "Points of Entry" into the Topic of Abortion

There are many "points of entry" into the abortion issue. One may speak directly of the child as the least among us, and of his/her rights and our responsibilities to him/her. One may, on the other hand, begin by speaking about the rights of the woman to better choices than abortion, and the many ways that abortion hurts women. Abortion can also be addressed in the context of justice and peace, and the need to reject violence and promote the unity of the human family. The point of entry can also be God Himself as the source of life and the Giver of the right to life. These and many other starting points, Biblical and extra-Biblical, offer a speaker enough options to adapt a sermon or talk to many diverse needs and situations.

Sometimes an entire message should be devoted to the abortion tragedy. At other times, one can simply make reference to abortion when speaking, for example, of the evils in the world or the requirements of loving our neighbor. It may mean just the mention of the word, or perhaps a sentence or two. The Golden Rule, for example, provides a short, effective argument against abortion. Just let people put themselves in the baby's place. (We were, in fact, there at one time.) Other Scriptural references are given below.

Scriptural Starting Points

Overall themes

The Bible clearly teaches that abortion is wrong. This teaching comes across in many ways and for many reasons. Some people point out that the word "abortion" is not in the Bible, and that is true. Nevertheless, the teaching about abortion is there. This is the case with many teachings. The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible, but the teaching about the Trinity is there. In any case, a person who wants to deny the teaching about abortion would deny it even if the word were there.

Let's look at some of the Biblical reasons why abortion, the deliberate destruction of a child in the womb, is very wrong.

1. God has absolute dominion over human life.

This theme is reflected in the creation accounts and in all the Scriptural passages declaring God to be Lord of the universe. Because God has made us, our lives and bodies are not our own, nor are our choices absolute. "None of us lives as his own master and none of us dies as his own master. While we live we are responsible to the Lord, and when we die we die as his servants" (Rom.14:7-8). "You are not your own. You have been purchased, and at a price" (1Cor.6:19-20).

2. The Bible teaches that human life is different from other types of life, because human beings are made in the very image of God.

The accounts of the creation of man and woman in Genesis (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-25) tell us this: "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

The word "create" is used three times here, emphasizing a special crowning moment in the whole process of God's making the world and everything in it. The man and woman are given "dominion" over everything else in the visible world.

Not even the original sin takes away the image of God in human beings. St. James refers to this image and says that because of it we should not even speak ill of one another. "With [the tongue] we bless the Lord and Pastor, and with it we curse human beings who are made in the image of God . . . This ought not be so, brothers" (James 3:9-10).

The image of God! This is what it means to be human! We are not just a bunch of cells randomly thrown together by some impersonal forces. Rather, we really reflect an eternal God who knew us from before we were made, and purposely called us into being.

At the heart of the abortion tragedy is the question raised in the Psalms: "Lord, what is man that you care for him, mortal man that you keep him in mind? . . . With glory and honor you crowned him, giving him power over the works of your hands" (Psalm 8:5-7).

There is the key. Not only did God make us, but He values us. The Bible tells us of a God who is madly in love with us, so much so that He became one of us and even died for us while we were still offending Him (see Romans 5:6-8).

All of this clearly contradicts the statement abortion makes, that is, that human life is disposable.

3. The Bible teaches that children are a blessing.

God commanded our first parents to "Be fertile and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Why? God Himself is fertile. Love always overflows into life. When the first mother brought forth the first child, she exclaimed, "I have brought forth a man with the help of the Lord" (Genesis 4:1). The help of the Lord is essential, for He has dominion over human life and is its origin. Parents cooperate with God in bringing forth life. Because this whole process is under God's dominion, it is sinful to interrupt it. The prophet Amos condemns the Ammonites "because they ripped open expectant mothers in Gilead" (Amos 1:13).

"Truly children are a gift from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalm 127:3).

4. The Bible teaches that the child in the womb is truly a human child, who even has a relationship with the Lord.

The phrase "conceived and bore" is used repeatedly (see Genesis 4:1,17) and the individual has the same identity before as after birth. "In sin my mother conceived me," the repentant psalmist says in Psalm 51:7. The same word is used for the child before and after birth (Brephos, that is, "infant," is used in Luke 1:41 and Luke 18:15.)

God knows the preborn child. "You knit me in my mother's womb . . . nor was my frame unknown to you when I was made in secret" (Psalm 139:13,15). God also helps and calls the preborn child. "You have been my guide since I was first formed . . . from my mother's womb you are my God" (Psalm 22:11-12). "God... from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace" (St. Paul to the Galatians 1:15).

5. Scripture repeatedly condemns the killing of the innocent.

This flows from everything that has been seen so far. God's own finger writes in stone the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17) and Christ reaffirms it (Matthew 19:18 - notice that He mentions this commandment first). The Book of Revelation affirms that (unrepentant) murderers cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (Revelation 22:15).

The killing of children is especially condemned by God through the prophets. In the land God gave his people to occupy, foreign nations had the custom of sacrificing some of their children in fire. God told His

people that they were not to share in this sin. They did, however, as Psalm 106 relates: "They mingled with the nations and learned their works... They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and they shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, desecrating the land with bloodshed" (Psalm 106:35, 37-38).

This sin of child-sacrifice, in fact, is mentioned as one of the major reasons that the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians and the people taken into exile. "They mutilated their sons and daughters by fire... till the Lord, in his great anger against Israel, put them away out of his sight" (2 Kings 17:17-18).

Notice this practice was a religious ritual. Not even for "religious freedom" can the killing of children be tolerated.

6. The Bible teaches that God is a God of justice.

An act of justice is an act of intervention for the helpless, an act of defense for those who are too weak to defend themselves. In foretelling the Messiah, Psalm 72 says, "Justice shall flower in his days... for he shall rescue the poor man when he cries out and the afflicted when he has no one to help him" (Psalms 72:7,12). Jesus Christ is our justice (1 Corinthians 1:30) because He rescued us from sin and death when we had none to help us (see Romans 5:6, Ephesians 2:45).

If God does justice for His people, He expects His people to do justice for one another. "Be merciful as your heavenly Pastor is merciful" (Luke 6:36). "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). "Do unto others as you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12). "Love one another" (John 15:17).

Abortion is the opposite of these teachings. It is a reversal of justice. It is a destruction of the helpless rather than a rescue of them. If God's people do not intervene to save those whose lives are attacked, then the people are not pleasing or worshiping Him.

God says through Isaiah, "Trample my courts no more! Bring no more worthless offerings... Your festivals I detest... When you spread out your hands, I close my eyes to you; though you pray the more, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood! Wash yourselves clean... learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow" (Isaiah 1:13-17).

Indeed, those who worship God but promote abortion are falling into the same contradiction as God's people of old, and need to hear the same message.

7. Jesus Christ paid special attention to the poor, the despised, and those whom the rest of society considered insignificant.

He broke down the false barriers that people set up among themselves, and instead acknowledged the equal human dignity of every individual, despite what common opinion might say. Hence we see Him reach out to children despite the efforts of the apostles to keep them away (Matthew 19:13-15); to tax collectors and sinners despite the objections of the Scribes (Mark 2:16); to the blind despite the warnings of the crowd (Matthew 20:29-34); to a foreign woman despite the utter surprise of the disciples and of the woman herself (John 4:9, 27); to Gentiles despite the anger of the Jews (Matthew 21:41-46); and to the lepers, despite their isolation from the rest of society (Luke 17:11-19).

When it comes to human dignity, Christ erases distinctions. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

We can likewise say, "There is neither born nor unborn." Using this distinction as a basis for the value of life or the protection one deserves is meaningless and offensive to all that Scripture teaches. The unborn are the segment of our society which is most neglected and discriminated against.

8. *Scripture teaches us to love.*

St. John says, "This is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another, unlike Cain who belonged to the evil one and slaughtered his brother" (1 John 3:11-12). Love is directly contrasted with slaughter. To take the life of another is to break the command of love. To fail to help those in need and danger is also to fail to love.

Christ teaches this clearly in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), and in many other places.

No group of people is in more serious danger than the boys and girls in the womb. "If someone... sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in Him?" (1 John 3:17). Love, then, is what fuels the pro-life movement, impelling us to save the lives of children and provide life-giving alternatives to their parents. Love likewise demands that we reach out with compassion and healing to all wounded by abortion. If the pro-life movement is not a movement of love, it is nothing; but if it is a movement of love, nothing can stop it, for "Love is more powerful than death" (Song of Songs 8:6).

Abortion, in short, is the opposite of love. Love means, "I sacrifice myself for the good of the other person." Abortion means, "I sacrifice the other person for the good of myself."

9. *Life is victorious over death.*

This is one of Scripture's most basic themes. The victory of life is foretold in the promise that the head of the serpent, through whom death entered the world, would be crushed (see Genesis 3:15).

Isaiah promised, "He will destroy death forever" (Isaiah 25:8). At the scene of the first murder, the soil "opened its mouth" to swallow Abel's blood. At the scene of the final victory of life, it is death itself that "will be swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?... Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

Abortion is death. Christ came to conquer death, and therefore abortion. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

The final outcome of the battle for life has already been decided by the Resurrection of Christ. We are not just working for victory; we are working from victory. We joyfully take a victory that has already been won, and proclaim, celebrate, and serve it until He comes again to bring it to its fullness. "There shall be no more death" (Revelation 21:4). "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

Expanding upon Some Specific Passages

1. Gen. 4:8-16 *Am I my Brother's Keeper?*

"Let us go out into the field," Cain said to his younger brother Abel. When they were in the field, Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4:8). The Lord then asked Cain, "Where is your brother?" This was the most uncomfortable question Cain had yet faced in his life. How could he stand up to God and explain the murder of his own brother? It was an issue he wished would go away; it was a truth too hard to deal with. So, in a desperate attempt to dodge the issue, he claimed ignorance. "I do not know," was his response to God.

It is interesting to note that the United States Supreme Court, in its 1973 abortion decision *Roe vs. Wade*, faced the same question and gave the same answer. "Where is your brother?" The Court responded, "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer." [410 U.S. 113, 159] In other words, "I don't know."

Then Cain went on to challenge God for asking the question in the first place. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9) With these words, he tried to absolve himself of responsibility for his brother. Abel's whereabouts, his safety, his very life were not the responsibility of Cain! This response is mirrored today by those who claim they are just "minding their own business" rather than getting involved in the effort to end abortion.

God, however, called Cain back at once to take responsibility for his own actions against his brother. "What have you done?", God demanded. Cain wanted the issue to go away, but it wouldn't go away. The issue was as close to Cain as Cain himself. It was his own action that took his brother's life. Yes, he is his brother's keeper by the very fact that he is his brother. His brother has rights which he must "keep;" that is, respect and, if necessary, defend. Cain had done the opposite. He held his brother's rights in contempt. He had no regard for his brother's very right to life. He tried to conceal his action by taking his brother into the field, where nobody else would see them. Yet God confirms that the deed cannot be covered over. "Listen," God tells Cain, "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil!" (Gen. 4:10) The issue just won't go away.

We are our brothers' keepers; this is not an option. Rather, it flows from our very existence as sons and daughters of one God in one human family. We do not only have responsibilities toward those we choose. Rather, we have responsibilities towards one another even before we choose. We have responsibility especially for the weakest and most defenseless ones in our society, the unborn, who are daily ripped apart in their mothers' womb by abortion.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is ultimately the one who answers Cain's argument, "Am I my brother's keeper?" and our arguments about "minding our business" and about "privacy." Christ is the one who teaches us in clear terms that we do have responsibility to each other, and that we cannot make the issue of injustice to our neighbor go away. For Christ declares to us, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). How did he love us? St. Paul tells us, "It is precisely in this that God shows his love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In other words, Christ took the initiative. He came to us and died for us before our asking him and without our deserving him. We were totally helpless. He acted out of pure love when he saw our need. He made our plight his business. He didn't hesitate for one minute; he didn't ask His Pastor, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

As Christ loved us, so must we love our pre-born brothers and sisters. We do not love them because they ask it or merit it. We love them because they are our brothers and sisters in need. Abortion is an issue that is solved not by wishing it away or ignoring it. It is solved only by active love. We are our brother's keeper. Amen!

2. Ex.20:16 *Abortion and the Eighth Commandment*

We usually think of abortion as a violation of the Fifth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," and that is true. But abortion is wrong for many reasons. It breaks all the commandments.

The Eighth Commandment says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." This is not only a matter of falsely testifying that somebody did something wrong, as we see, for example, in the Old Testament story of Susanna (Daniel 13). This commandment also forbids false testimony about who our neighbor is, about what value and dignity our neighbor possesses, and about what our obligations to our neighbor are.

The question in abortion is not only, "When does life begin?" but more deeply, "What does life mean?" What are the implications of being human? Is human life disposable when it is unwanted, or inconvenient, or not recognized by a government? Is there anything about human existence that cries out for recognition and protection apart from what a particular society decides to bestow? What is the truth about humanity? What is the human person destined for? Are we made for the grave or for the skies?

Abortion not only takes a life; it makes a statement about life, and not only about the life it takes, but about the lives of all of us. Abortion says we are disposable. Abortion says our value is determined by others. Abortion says there is no intrinsic dignity in human life that requires its absolute protection, and no destiny that reaches beyond this world or even beyond this Supreme Court.

Do not bear false witness against your neighbor! Abortion lies about the human person. Christ, on the other hand, reveals the truth about human life, particularly by His Ascension, He shows that we are made for the heights of heaven, not for the medical waste bag.

"Lord, what is man that You care for him?" (Ps.8:5). The psalmist asked the question, and God Himself answered it in Christ. May our treatment of human life faithfully echo that answer!

3. Mt.7:12 *The Golden Rule*

When we come close to Christ, He makes it very clear how we are to respond to our neighbor. These, in fact, are the first two Commandments of Christ's Law: love God above all; love your neighbor as yourself. Two sayings of our Lord make it clear how we must love our neighbor. One is the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The other is, "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do to Me."

These words of Christ help us deal with one of the most burning issues of our day: abortion. Our response to abortion is a response to a tiny, helpless child and his/her mother. Apply the Golden Rule. Put yourself in the child's place. (We were all in the womb at one point ourselves.) Would you want to be cared for and nourished and brought safely to birth, or aborted? How easily the child is forgotten, because he/she is not seen and cannot protest the abortion decision. But who would want to be killed in his/her mother's womb? The Golden Rule also applies to the mother. If you were afraid because you felt you could not handle a pregnancy, what would you want? Help! We need to commit ourselves to help mothers raise their children, not kill them. There are over 3,000 helping centers throughout the country, but they need more assistance from all of us!

Our Lord also tells us, "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do to me." After we put ourselves in the position of the pre-born child and the mother, we then put Christ Himself there! Surely the pre-born child is the "least" of His brothers and sisters! The preborn have the least power, the least protection, the least voice! They cannot speak, vote, protest, or even pray! The mothers also are often so alone, and cast aside by those who don't understand their problems. Christ makes it clear: by helping both mother and child, we are helping Him! By rejecting the mother and child, we reject Him!

To love one another as Christ taught us demands that we reject abortion completely, and work for better, life-giving choices! Amen!

4. Lk.16:19-31 *The Lazarus of the 20th Century*

We learn many lessons from those who go to heaven. In the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we learn a lesson from one who went to hell.

Why was the Rich Man condemned? Was it because he had so much? Was there something inherently sinful about the purple and linen in which he dressed, or the feasts in which he indulged? No. The rich man went to hell because he ignored the other man. He was not condemned for what he did, but for what he did not do. He did not recognize or treat Lazarus as his equal, his brother. Instead, he thought that because Lazarus' possessions were less valuable than his, that Lazarus was less valuable than he. The beggar's cries went unheeded.

The story causes us to wonder what we would do if we were there. Brothers and sisters, we are there. You and I have an appointment with Lazarus today, and we will be judged on how we respond. The Lazarus of the 20th century is in our midst. He is in our midst in the poor, the troublesome, the annoying, the person who is smaller and weaker than we are, and the person who seems different and less valuable.

In particular, the Lazarus of the 20th century is our preborn brother or sister. This is the person rejected by society, the person who begs for help to live but whose cries are rejected 4400 times a day in our country. This is the person torn apart and thrown away by abortion.

The rich man was condemned for not treating Lazarus as his brother. We also will be condemned if we do not treat the preborn as our brother or sister. Many oppose abortion and would never have one, but they then ask, "Who am I to interfere with a woman's choice to abort?" Today, I will tell you who you are. You are a brother, a sister of that child in the womb! "Who am I to interfere with her choice?" You are a human being who has enough decency to stand up and say "NO!" when you see another human being about to be killed. "Who am I to interfere with her choice?" You are a person who has enough wisdom to realize that injustice to one human being is injustice to every human being, and that your life is only as safe as the life of the preborn child. "Who am I to interfere with her choice?" You are a follower of the One who said, "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do to Me." Do we not believe that if we allow a person to die of starvation, that we are allowing Christ to die of starvation? Do we not believe that if we leave the sick untended, that we are leaving Christ untended? Must we not then also believe that whenever a child in the womb is ripped apart, burned, crushed, and then thrown away, that Christ is ripped apart, burned, crushed, and thrown away? It is Christ in the womb! When we stand up for life we stand up for Him!

If abortion is not wrong then nothing is wrong. If we cannot be stirred to respond as individuals, as a Church, and as a nation, to the plight of the preborn children, then we have lost our soul. Indeed, the Lazarus of the 20th century is knocking at our door. God, have mercy on us and help us to respond! Amen!

5. Jn.14:6 *The Way, the Truth, and the Life*

Christ Undoes Satan's Works

There are many ways to express the purpose of Christ's mission in the world. St. John in his first letter sums it up by saying, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). What "works of the devil" does Christ destroy? Christ Himself tells us that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the Father of lies" (John 8:44). In one and the same breath, Our Lord calls the devil a liar and a murderer. Lies and murder go together. The only way abortion can continue on such a horrible scale is for it to be covered in lies, sugarcoated with denials and distortions of truth. Christ has come to destroy the works of the devil. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). He is the way to salvation precisely because He is the Truth, shattering the devil's lies, and because He is the Life, undoing the devil's work of death.

A Liar and Murderer From the Beginning

We see the devil act in character with lies and murder from the first pages of the Bible. Adam and Eve had been told they could eat of any tree in the garden except "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." "In the day that you eat of it," God warned them, "you shall die" (Gen 2:17). What is wrong with knowing good from evil? Aren't we supposed to know the difference between good and evil? Isn't that part of our religious and moral education? Don't so many problems come about when people do not know good from evil? Why, then, is this the one tree of which our first parents were not to eat?

The answer lies in the fact that the "knowledge of good and evil" here does not simply mean "knowing." It means that Adam and Eve would think they could decide the difference between good and evil, that they would be the ones to determine what was right and wrong, that they would be the norm of morality. This is the original temptation. "What's right and wrong for me is up to me... What's right and wrong for you is up to you... Do not impose your morality on me. . . I will create my own values... I am accountable to nobody but myself." In other words, it's all up to my own personal choice. The original sin is to put choice above goodness and truth, to abuse freedom by trying to create what is right rather than submit to it. In his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (The *Splendor of Truth*, August 6, 1993), Pope John Paul II comments on Genesis 2:16-17. "With this image, revelation teaches that the power to decide what is good and what is evil does not belong to man, but to God alone. The man is certainly free... But his freedom is not unlimited: It must halt before the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil,' for it is called to accept the moral law given by God" (VS #35).

God had warned Adam and Eve they would die if they disobeyed. The devil had to lie to them to introduce death into the world. So the original liar approached the original woman and offered the original lie: "You certainly will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5). Eve bought the lie, as did Adam, and they committed the original sin. Death then entered the world, on the heels of a lie.

Babel: The Lie Continues

The original lie continued at the tower of Babel, in Babylon. It is noteworthy that "bab-ili" means "gate of the gods." Here again, humans tried to exalt themselves to the status of God. "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves" (Gen. 11:4). "Let us make," they said, forgetting that God is the one who said, "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26).

Seeing their forgetfulness and pride, God said, "This is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (Gen. 11:6). God was not saying here that He felt threatened. He was saying that people who have bought the lie that they themselves are the norm of truth and goodness will think they can do anything, and in trying to do so, will only destroy themselves. The original lie perpetuated will only perpetuate death. It is His infinite mercy and love that move Him to say, "Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (Gen. 11:17). Better for them to be scattered by God's intervention than dashed on the rocks of their own pride! God confused the language only after the people had confused it first by speaking the lie that they could make a name for themselves, rather than submitting to the name (the truth) of God.

Babel Revisited in 1992

This lie continues in our day and, in fact, has become the official policy of America, according to the Supreme Court. In this decision on abortion, in which the error of *Roe v. Wade* was upheld, the Court stated, "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and

of the mystery of human life." (*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, 1992, [505 U.S.833, 851]) This line is incredible! We cannot even decide the weather, and yet we are expected to define existence itself! We live in a universe we did not create, and yet we are declared to be the creators of that universe's meaning! We did not call ourselves into life, yet we have the liberty to define the meaning of life! Not only is this absurd, but it is frightfully familiar: "You shall be like God, knowing good and evil." "Let us make a name for ourselves." "The gate of the gods." Perhaps the Court's decision should be re-named "Eden and Babel Revisited."

Abortion Cloaked in Lies

The original lie leads to the ongoing slaughter of babies by abortion. The mother is told, "It's your choice. It's your freedom. It's your body. Nobody can impose their morality on you." It is the lie that choice prevails over life itself.

Abortion continues thanks to many other lies as well. Women are lied to about the nature of the developing baby and about the effects of the abortion procedure. Carol Everett, herself a victim of abortion and once an abortion provider, wrote, "Like many others, I bought the big lie: 'It is only a glob of tissue not a baby.' I was a victim of all the other lies: Abortion is all right. After all, I do them all the time. It will be so simple. It's only a glob of tissue. There's really nothing to the procedure; it will only take a little while and then everything will be fine. You can have the abortion on Friday morning and be back to work on Monday." (*The Scarlet Lady*, p.101). The workers at the abortion center were trained to give as little information as possible, so that women would not know the truth.

The Elliot Institute in Springfield, Illinois, does research on the effects of abortion on women, and collects case studies in which women describe what led them to abortion and what consequences followed. Case after case shows how they were victimized by lies and half-truths. The efforts made to initiate wide-spread abortion in America were marked by lies, as Dr. Bernard Nathanson, former abortionist and co-founder of the National Abortion Rights Action League, readily admits. Now a strong advocate for the right to life, he writes, "How many deaths were we talking about when abortion was illegal?... It was always '5,000 to 10,000 a year.' I confess that I knew the figures were totally false" (*Aborting America*, p.193). A growing number of former abortion providers in our country are coming forward to tell how they lied to women before abortions and covered up the tracks of botched abortions by falsifying medical records.

The lies continue and murder continues.

The Splendor of Truth

The solution demands that we lift high the truth. Truth is on the side of life. Let us proclaim the truth that the preborn child is a human person from the moment of conception; that love for the woman demands love for her child; that there are concrete, lifegiving alternatives to abortion; that there are negative physical, psychological, and spiritual consequences of abortion; that choice never takes priority over life itself; and that freedom is found by submitting to the moral truth that comes from God rather than by trying to be God ourselves. Christ provides us the only way of salvation namely, Himself, for He is truth and life.

Ultimately we save the world from the bondage of abortion and every other sin by lifting Christ high. "If you continue in my Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).

6. 1 Jn.4:7-10; Jn. 15:9-17 *Love Leads to Life*

The basis of Christianity is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Christians rejoice in the Resurrection, because it is the victory of life not only for Christ but for each person who believes in Him. Christ's rising from the grave means that we too will rise from the grave!

The victory of life is also the victory of love. From the first page of Scripture to the last, it is clear that love leads to life. These two realities cannot be separated, because they are rooted in the one God, who cannot be divided. Scripture tells us that God is love (1Jn. 4:8). Scripture also tells us that God is life (see Jn.14:6). Love and life always go together.

We see this in creation. Where were you 100 years ago today? You were nowhere; you did not exist. So why are you here today? How were you rescued from that nothingness you were once in? Certainly you did not ask to be born. You weren't there to do the asking. Certainly you did not earn it because you weren't there to do anything that could earn it. What accounts for the fact that you are here? We can say that your parents came together and you were conceived and born, and that is true. But that doesn't fully answer the question of why you are here. When your parents came together, there could have been millions of possible people conceived and born, who would have been your brothers or sisters. It didn't have to be you!

The only ultimate explanation of why you are here is that God loves you. He chose you to be! In fact, at each moment He is literally loving you into existence. If He stopped loving you for one instant, you would fall back into the nothingness you were in 100 years ago. Love leads to life.

This is clear also in the mystery of salvation. St. John tells us, "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him" (1Jn 4:9). Christ's love for us brought Him to the cross, and this led to the victory of life. The crucifix is the best symbol of love. Love is self-giving for the good of another person. Christ gives His life for us, without complaining and without counting the cost. His concern is that we might have life.

Having shown His love for us in this way, He instructs us, "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 15:12). He does not say, "Love one another in whatever way you want," but rather, "as I have loved you." We are called to love in a way that brings forth new life. We are called to give ourselves, without counting the cost, that others may live.

Parents, therefore, cooperate with the work of God when their love for each other becomes a new human being. The child they bear belongs to God first. Only God can create. Mother and Pastor are participating in the work of God. Parents do not own their children; God does. In fact, parents do not own themselves. Many people today say, "This is *my* life, *my* body, *my* choice." But we are not our own masters. We belong to God. "Nobody lives as his own master and nobody dies as his own master" (Rom.14:7). "You are not your own" (1Cor. 6:19).

The choice to be a mother or Pastor is not merely a human choice. It is God's choice first. Our Lord tells us, "It is not you who have chosen Me. I have chosen you, to go forth and bear fruit" (Jn.15:16). A parent becomes a parent before s/he knows it. One is a Pastor or mother as soon as his/her child begins to exist, and the child begins to exist at the moment of conception. (This is not a matter of opinion or religious belief, but a matter of verifiable and established scientific fact.) Parents discover that they have become parents several weeks after the fact. A pregnant woman should not say, "I'm expecting a child." The child already exists. Nor should she say, "I'm going to be a mother." She already is. And the man is already a Pastor.

There is nothing comparable to having a child. Everything that a person owns is less valuable than himself. Even if someone owns a multimillion dollar corporation, all that money is ultimately a pile of rocks. Even gold will eventually fade away into nothing. But a child, given an immortal soul and the call to eternal life,

will never go out of existence. For all eternity, as long as God is God, the child, the person, will always exist. A child is equal to his/her parents. He is not equal in age, nor in knowledge (thought he often thinks so), nor in experience, but the child IS equal in dignity, in value, in worth as a person created in God's image and redeemed by Christ. Every person is equal in this way, whether in the womb or outside the womb, no matter how young or old, healthy or sick, big or small, famous or obscure. Were one to take all of the galaxies in the universe, with their hundreds of billions of stars and incalculable beauty and power, they would not add up to a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of the worth of one, tiny human child.

A parent is called to love his/her children as Christ has loved us. "Greater love than this no one has, than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13). A mother who demonstrates this in a particularly striking way is Saint Gianna Beretta Molla, who died in 1962 and was declared "blessed" by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994 [and canonized on May 16, 2004]. She was a doctor and mother of three children. When she became pregnant with her fourth, it was discovered that she had a tumor near her uterus. She made it very clear to her doctor and her family that she wanted everything done to save the life of her baby. The baby was born healthy but despite efforts to save her, Gianna died several days later at the age of 39. "This is absurd," some may say. But look again at the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ. "Greater love than this no one has, than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn.15:13).

Most parents will not be called to face what Gianna Molla faced, but all parents, and all Christians, are called to lay down their lives for the sake of others in so many ways every day. Let us pray especially for mothers who are afraid of motherhood, and who are tempted to abort their children. Let us pray that they accept the grace to love as Christ has loved us. God will never place an obligation before us without also giving us every ounce of strength we need to carry it through. Let us praise Him for His grace, for His love, and for the victory of Life! Amen.

Partial List of Individual Scripture References

Gen. 1:1-2,26-28 Creation of man

Gen. 2:7-8,18,21-24 Creation of man and woman

Gen. 4:8-16 The first killing of the innocent

Ex. 20:1-17 The Decalogue

Lev. 19:15-18 Love of your neighbor's life

Deut. 30:15-20 Choose Life!

Jeremiah 7:27-31 The rebuke of child sacrifice

Ezekiel 23:36-39 Child sacrifice

2 Kings 24:1-4 The exile occurred because innocent blood was shed.

Proverbs 6:16-19 The Lord hates six things.

Jeremiah 1:4-8 I called you from the womb.

Isaiah 49:1-6 The Lord called me from the womb.

Isaiah 49:14-17 Can a mother forget her infant?

Isaiah 1:10-17 Do justice!

Amos 5:21-24 Let justice roll down like a river!

Psalms 72 He will save the weak from violence!

Psalms 82 Rescue the weak!

Psalms 139 You knit me together in the womb!

Proverbs 24:8-12 Rescue those taken to death!

Matt. 18:1-6,10-14 Do not despise the little ones.

Matt. 25:31-46 Whatsoever you do to the least...

Mark 10:13-16 He blessed children.

Luke 1:39-45 The babe leapt in the womb.

Luke 6:20-26 Beatitudes and woes

Luke 10:29-37 The Good Samaritan is neighbor to anyone in need.

Luke 16:19-31 The Lazarus of the 20th Century: The Unborn Child

John 1:1-5 All things, all life, comes through Christ.

John 10:7-15 The Good Shepherd came to give us life.

John 11:17-27 Christ is the Life.

John 14:1-6 Christ is the Life.

1 Cor. 15:51-58 The victory belongs to life; you do not labor in vain.

Eph. 6:10-20 Be strong in this battle!

James 1:22-27 Religion requires us to help the helpless.

1 John 3:11-18 Love rather than kill.

Rev. 4:8-11 You have created all things.

Rev. 21:1-5 Death shall be no more

Conclusion

A Tragedy beyond words

Ultimately, our people need to see the reality behind the word "abortion." We are a visual society. The word "abortion" has lost its meaning for people, because they have in their mind a far more benign, innocuous notion of abortion than what it actually is. Words alone cannot describe its horror. Unless people appreciate the horror of abortion, they will not feel the appropriate sense of outrage that it deserves. Without an appropriate sense of outrage, people seldom take personal responsibility for ending injustice. Many think we are over-reacting to abortion. We need to help them see that they are under-reacting.

Therefore we recommend that every possible and appropriate means be taken to show people the reality of the unborn child and the destructive act of abortion. Videos of ultrasound and fetoscopy, as well as actual scenes of abortion and aborted children are available (*A Window to the Womb, The Silent Scream, Eclipse of Reason, Harder Truth*).

Preaching is to serve the ongoing conversion and growth in holiness of the people entrusted to our pastoral care. A "pastor" is a "shepherd". To shepherd our people in an age of abortion requires preachers who will be clear and courageous in confronting evil, and likewise calm and compassionate in calling back those who have committed evil. It involves not only getting people to think the right way about things like abortion, but it involves inspiring and equipping them to take action to stop such evils. This is a challenging art, and an urgent need.

It is a mission for which we will never be lacking all the tools and grace we need.