



PRIESTS FOR LIFE

Gospel of Life Ministries

Assisting God's people to respond to the evils of abortion and euthanasia

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Clerical Contraception

"It's not any easier to raise up a spiritual family than a physical family. Some people look at the priest and say: "Well, he's not married, he doesn't have any children, his life must be easier." Oh, no. To think that it's easier is to fall into materialism. Why materialism? Because we see physical realities as the only real reality. Spiritual realities are real ones too! Some people ask us, "Can priests have children?" Sure! In fact, if we don't have children, born of our preaching of the Word and our administration of the Sacraments, there is no growth in faith. Think of those who, through our priestly ministry, hear the call of Christ to come into the Church, or overcome obstacles to faith and prayer, or receive new life by the sacraments. These are our spiritual children! If we are not of the mind that we are to be generative, that we are to bring spiritual children into the world, then we are practicing what might be called a clerical contraception. We are ordained to bring forth life and to do so generously." (Fr. Frank Pavone, Address to Clergy and Lay Leaders in the Philippines, 1994. For the full talk, see www.priestsforlife.org/articles/Role.html.)

Ending Abortion the Church's Way

(Part 1) *by Fr. Frank Pavone*

The premise of Priests for Life is that abortion will end through the Church, because Christ has conquered death, and it is He who works through each of us to bring this victory to every segment of our society. The activity of the People of God to end abortion is not primarily a response to *Roe vs. Wade*. It is, *rather*, a response to *Jesus Christ*.

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Fr. Denis Wilde, O.S.A. speaks to 500 High School students in Syracuse, NY



On January 22, 2008, women and men of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign again marched at the front of the March for Life in Washington, DC.

A Movement of Mercy

The pro-life movement is a movement of mercy. Rachel's Vineyard is the largest ministry in the world for healing after abortion, and it functions worldwide under the umbrella of Priests for Life. Many of those who are healed then share their testimony of the harm abortion did and the healing Christ brought. The Silent No More Awareness Campaign gives them a platform to do this. The campaign is not a separate organization, but rather a joint project of Priests for Life and Anglicans for Life.

Please publicize these missions of mercy in your newsletters and websites. Visit www.RachelsVineyard.org and www.SilentNoMoreAwareness.org.

The Virgin Mary and Abortion

by Fr. Frank Pavone

Abortion is largely a problem of mothers afraid to be mothers. That may be one of the reasons why there is such a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother within the Catholic element of the pro-life movement.

Let's look at a few of the links between our beliefs about the Virgin Mary and our pro-life convictions.



There is one Mediator...

Some Christians question why we give so much devotion to the

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Ending Abortion the Church's Way

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This response, of course, overflows the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II, in *The Gospel of Life*, told us, “No single person or group has a monopoly on the defense and promotion of life. These are everyone’s task and responsibility” (EV 91). He says this after asserting that the effort must be ecumenical and, in fact, must include the involvement of all people of good will.

The United States Catholic Bishops have provided marvelous guidance on how the pro-life effort of the Catholic Church should be undertaken, and at the conclusion of their national *Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities*, they echo what John Paul II said in the quote above. They write, “We hold in high esteem all who proclaim and serve the Gospel of life. Through their peaceful activism, education, prayer, and service, they witness to God’s truth and embody our Lord’s command to love one another as he loves us. We assure them of our continuing prayers. And we renew our appeal to all in the Catholic community to join with them and with us in building a culture of life.”

“No single person or group has a monopoly on the defense and promotion of life.”

That openness to others, that esteem for those who work for life in every denomination, and even outside the realm of Christianity, is essential for success - and that attitude is inherently a *Catholic attitude*. The word “Catholic,” after all, means “universal.”

Clergy and laity, together, are the “Church.” We are to be united with our leaders, first and foremost the real and living Person of Jesus Christ, who lives in and works through each of us. We are to be in union with his Vicar on earth, and with the bishops in union with the Successor of Peter.

One of the important aspects of being in union with our Church leaders is to read and study what they write. When Priests for Life was established, one of the explicit goals of its mission - to which we have been faithful ever since - was to publicize the documents of the Magisterium regarding abortion. On our website, you can find statements of the Popes and bishops on abortion reaching back for decades. (See www.priestsforlife.org/magisteriumteachings.html).

These documents, of course, are to be read in the context of what our leaders say regarding the respective roles of the laity and clergy. The documents of the Second Vatican Council, for example, are crucial.

Amidst all these writings we learn that the work of the ministry should not be “clericalized.” In other words, the laity are not to wait for the priest to tell them to bring the Gospel into the world. Each of us already received that commission from the Lord when our priest baptized us and when our bishop confirmed us! Of course, we rely on our shepherds for guidance as we carry out the mission. But it would be a big mistake to imagine ourselves as awaiting instructions for every step we take.

The Church is a family, a community, a body of believers called together in faith, forming relationships with one another, and joining our gifts of grace and nature to work together to advance God’s Kingdom of life.

The Virgin Mary and Abortion

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Blessed Virgin Mary, and claim that it compromises the unique worship which Christ alone deserves. We do not, of course, “worship” Mary in any sense. She, too, is a creature, and all her importance flows from the uniqueness of Christ.

But how is it that Christ became the unique Mediator? A mediator is a bridge between the two parties being mediated, in this case, God and humanity. Christ was God from all eternity. It is precisely in taking upon Himself a *human nature* that He becomes the Mediator. This human nature is taken from Mary. The very fact that Christ is the one Mediator demonstrates the critical role of the one Mother from whom He became human.

All the importance of Mary flows from her Son, and worship of the Son naturally leads to honoring the Mother. Right from this fundamental point, Marian devotion teaches us something about our pro-life commitment. *Mother and child belong together.*

The difference between the pro-abortion side and the pro-life side is *not* that they favor women’s rights and we love the baby. The real difference is that they think you can separate the two and we say you can’t. The pro-abortion mentality claims you can love the mother while killing the child. The pro-life mentality asserts that you can’t harm one without harming the other and you can’t love one without loving the other. The pro-life position has never been, “Love the baby and forget about the mother.” It is rather, always and only, “Let’s love them both.”

Immaculate Conception

Mary was conceived without Original Sin. This favor was granted to her in anticipation of her role as the Mother of God. A fundamental truth that appears here, and is reflected in various Scriptures, is the relationship of God with the child in the womb and the manner in which he prepares that child for his/her mission.

This doctrine likewise proclaims to us the broader truth about victory over sin. Mary was not exempt from the need of a Savior; He simply shared with her in a unique way the victory over sin that He offers all of us.

Those who have abortions do not have them because of “freedom of choice,” but rather because they feel they have no freedom and no choice. Mountains of pressure and confusion fall upon them. Yet in the struggle against temptation and sin, there is always sufficient grace to do what is right. “God keeps his promise. He will not let you be tested beyond your strength. Along with the test he will give you a way out of it so that you may be able to endure it” (1Cor10:13). This conviction is a key tool to help those who are tempted and to encourage those who counsel others against abortion.

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Some of the instruments used to kill children in the womb

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Annunciation (Lk.1:26-38)

Mary faces an unplanned pregnancy. Her response is *Let it be done to me according to your word*. She freely chooses to accept the Child, and in doing so, acknowledges the primacy of the word. In other words, the *truth* of God's Word exists before her own choosing. She submits to a word, a truth, she did not create. At the heart of the "pro-choice" mentality is the idea that *we create our own truth*. This mentality holds that the value of the unborn child, and that child's very right to exist, *depend upon* the choice of the mother. In the pro-life mentality, on the other hand, the choice of the mother must *respect the truth of the inherent value of the child*, which does not in any way flow from or depend upon us. *Let it be done to me according to your word*.

As we submit to that truth, God does not rob us of our freedom. Instead, He lifts it up to Himself.

Mary's Practical Charity

Mary was firmly rooted in the truth and in charity. When she received Gabriel's message and learned she would be the mother of God, she did not lose sight of the pressing needs of her kinswoman Elizabeth. She undertook the arduous journey to the hill country, and tended to Elizabeth's needs for three months. (See Lk.1:39-56). Mary kept in touch with both heavenly and earthly reality. The truth of her new status did not distract her from Elizabeth's needs. Mary responded to those needs in a very practical way. The same happened at Cana. The celebration there in company with Christ and the Apostles did not blind her to the real needs of the newlyweds. And she responded.

Union with God does not turn us in on ourselves. Authentic holiness makes us more aware of and responsive to the real needs of others. The pro-life movement responds to the real needs of real children and their mothers. We provide these mothers with the concrete medical, financial, psychological, and spiritual help they need. Nothing distracts us. This is Marian pro-life ministry.

There is an axiom in psychiatry that says, "*Believe behavior*." See what the speaker does. The "pro-choice" (pro-abortion) movement masks over reality, and for all its rhetoric leaves women only three things: a scarred mind, a wounded body, and a dead baby. The pro-life movement, through more than 3000 helping centers throughout the nation, offers women real help in their need, and the gift of life. We learned this from a very special Mother.

"Abortion is fueled by fear and despair."

Assumed into Heaven

The Assumption speaks of the victory of Life over death. "*Today the virgin Mother of God was taken up into heaven to be the beginning and the pattern of the Church in its perfection...*" (Preface of the Assumption, P59). The Assumption is not only about Mary; it's about us. Mary has a unique privilege. Being the Mother of God, she was taken at once into glory upon the completion of her earthly life. Yet the entire Church is the Body of Christ. As we pray on the Ascension, "*where He has gone, we hope to follow*" (Preface of the Ascension, P26). We, too, are called to share an everlasting life, in body and soul, in the company of Christ and all who are saved. "I will raise him up on the last day" (Jn. 6:54).

The conviction, renewed by the Assumption, that the destiny of the human person is to be in the heights of heaven, is clearly incompatible with allowing human persons to be thrown in the garbage.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patroness of the Unborn. Her image was left on the tilma of Juan Diego at a time when human sacrifice was practiced by the Aztecs. They did this because of fear and despair, thinking the gods were against them and would destroy them. In her image, Our Lady is pregnant, and is carrying the God who is so much on our side that He becomes one of us! This Christian truth restored hope, and ended the practice of human sacrifice.

In our day, the child sacrifice which is abortion is likewise fueled by despair and fear. The Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to travel the nation and inspire people in their fight against abortion. You can inquire about its schedule, or request its presence in your community, by contacting The Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Inc.; 144 Sheldon Road, St. Albans, Vermont 05478; Tel. 802-524-5350; Fax 802-524-5673; email jkmi@jkmi.com.

Graduation

by Fr. Frank Pavone

Several years ago, I came across a story of a graduating class which dedicated its yearbook to all the students *who would have been graduating* that year had they not been killed – by abortion. How fitting a tribute that is. Other graduating classes have paid tribute to their abortion victims by a moment of prayer at the Baccalaureate mass or at the graduation ceremony.

And why not? Suppose that a tragedy took the lives of some of the graduating class just days or weeks before graduation. Would there not be a mention or a tribute at the ceremony? Why, then, should the victims who died longer ago be forgotten? It is not, after all, the timing of the death that matters, but the value of the life.

Some, of course, will object to inserting such a "negative" theme into a happy day.

Yes, life is tough, isn't it?... It's all mixed up with happiness and sadness, joy and tragedy. Are significant moments in our lives supposed to be insulated from all awareness of injustice? Are we to rejoice with those who rejoice, but not weep with those who weep?

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Prayer Intentions

You are encouraged to remember the following intentions as you pray the Liturgy of the Hours:

MAY INTENTION:

For an increase in the spirit of respectful dialogue with those who disagree with us on life issues.

JUNE INTENTION:

For increased ecumenical collaboration in defense of life.

