



priests for life

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Encouraging Priests in the Pro-Life Cause

Number 6

From the Director

A Challenge: Abortion Deserves Special, Unique Attention

My Brother Priests,

Thank you for taking the time to read our Priests for Life newsletter. As I meet more and more of you, it is clear that you are deeply concerned about the abortion tragedy.

Yet the concern also arises that there are many issues and many special apostolates, and that whatever special attention or activity we give to the fight against abortion, we also have to be ready to give to other issues and groups who represent those issues. We may therefore be tempted to say no to some special efforts to fight abortion, because, after all, we don't want everyone else lining up.

May I challenge this way of thinking.

I firmly embrace the consistency of our life ethic, namely, that every human life is always sacred. The Church is to speak out whenever and in whatever way the human person is attacked.

But what other "issue" destroys 4400 innocent lives every day, in the United States alone, and calls it a "legal right"? What disease? What war? What natural or unnatural calamity? What injustice?

(see CHALLENGE on page 2)

Pro-Life Themes in the Advent Liturgy

The introduction to the lectionary, when speaking of the Sundays of Advent, says, "Each gospel reading has a specific theme: the Lord's coming in glory at the end of time (first Sunday), John the Baptist (second and third Sundays), and the events which immediately prepared for the Lord's birth (fourth Sunday)" (No.11).

We focus, in other words, on the first and second comings of the same Christ, and on the one who teaches us how to prepare for His arrival, namely, by repentance. "Reform your lives! The reign of God is at hand." The New Testament readings complement and expand on John the Baptist's exhortations of repentance. St. Paul urges, "Let us cast off deeds of darkness" (1 Advent A), and "Live in perfect harmony with one another" (2d Advent A). He speaks of faith as an obedience (4th Advent A). St. James encourages, "Be patient . . . Steady your hearts" (3rd Advent A). The Old Testament proph-

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Homily:

A "No" to Capital Punishment

"But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust" (Matt.5:44-45).

We can accept the teachings on the Holy Eucharist and the Trinity, on heaven and the Immaculate Conception. But try the one on forgiveness and love of enemies. It may be the hardest of all.

Love of enemies is not a feeling. Nor does it mean we pretend we have no enemies. We do, for there are always people who stand against what we stand for.

Forgiving injuries does not mean pretending the injury didn't hurt. It did, and it was wrong.

But who is our enemy? Our enemy is still our brother, our sister. His/her wrongdoing does not erase the image of God in his/her very being. Nor does it erase the fact that Christ's blood was shed for our enemy.

To love our enemy means to want what is good for him/her, and to try to achieve it. The Lord mentions prayer as a practical starting point of love. When we pray for another, we keep that person under the cover of our love. We act like God. If we

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I am perfectly willing to be fair. If someone asks you to have a monthly holy hour for an end to abortion and you agree, and then someone else comes along and points out a tragedy claiming at least 4400 lives a day, then I agree you have just as much reason to have a monthly holy hour for that intention as well. Neither one would take priority. (This leaves aside, of course, the added aspect of abortion being a legal act with wealthy, powerful, media-connected groups promoting it and the fact that its victims can neither protest nor pray.)

Please let reality break through abstract concepts of, "What I do for one, I do for the others."

At the time of the Persian Gulf crisis several years ago, our Churches were full. I heard no complaints at that time to the effect that we were not concerned with other people dying that day. The Gulf crisis was appropriately a focal point at that moment. Were there some new crisis tomorrow, we would not hesitate to focus on that in prayer as well.

But abortion is a new crisis tomorrow, just as it was a new crisis today, when 4400 more people died who never died before. I see no more reason not to deal with this than reason for not dealing with the next sick call or funeral because there have been so many already.

Yes, abortion is the most devastating crisis we face. Don't be afraid to give it special treatment. No other problem approaches its magnitude. No other victims need you as much.

Sincerely,

Fr. Frank Pavone

Fr. Frank A. Pavone
National Director

For Youth

Join a nationwide youth response to the Holy Father's call to defend life and evangelize! Ask for the newsletter of Youth for Life at PO Box 612410, San Jose, CA 95161 (408) 955-9935. It's free!

a Priests for Life INVITATION

Priests for Life is an officially approved Catholic association of priests, deacons, and lay auxiliary members. Members make a special commitment to spread the Church's teachings on the sanctity of every human life from fertilization to natural death. Members benefit from contact with others throughout the country who have a similar commitment and much experience. Priests for Life works closely with diocesan respect life co-ordinators and in accordance with local diocesan policies. The Board of Directors serve the organization with the permission of their Ordinaries.

Please join by sending us the following information:

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY/STATE/ZIP _____
PHONE _____
FAX _____
E-MAIL _____
DIOCESE _____
PARISH _____

Priests for Life
P.O. Box 141172
Staten Island, NY 10314
(914) 937-8243
FAX (914) 937-9207

Advent Book Recommendation

Redeemer in the Womb makes for excellent Advent reading and pro-life reflection. Written by John Saward and published by Ignatius Press, this work helps us focus on that phase of Christ's life spent in Mary's womb. Christ joined all humanity to God in Himself. That includes the humanity of the pre-born. We were all once pre-born children, and so was God. Certainly we, as human beings and as representatives of God, have something to say about the pre-born!

Come to DC!

Will we see you in Washington DC for the Annual March for Life on January 22? You are encouraged to come for the educational Convention on January 20 and the Mass at the Shrine on the 21st.

For details call 202-LIFE-377.

Fr. Pavone and Fr. Hogan conducted a retreat for priests.



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refuse even to pray for the wrongdoer, then we have allowed the wrongdoer to interfere in our own relationship with God.

Some people say “Amen” to the restoration and use of the death penalty. They may feel that it “serves them right” and brings the “satisfaction” of revenge. Not necessarily.

Nor is that what we are called to seek. The death penalty feeds the notion that death is a solution to our problems. “Eliminate the person, and you have less to worry about.” Think again. The person is not the evil. The evil is to be eliminated; the person is to be loved. That’s neither a naive platitude nor a rhetorical distinction. That’s a challenge from the One who did the same to us.

FREE

FREE educational videos are available on the subject of abortion. Ideal for parish presentations—Contact Vickie at 201-947-3090.

at the Apostolate for Family Consecration’s headquarters in Bloomington, Ohio, September 18-22.



(THEMES) continued from page 1)

ets, furthermore, describe the results of the Messiah’s coming, “One nation shall not raise the sword against the other” (1 Advent A), “There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain” (2d Advent A). “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened . . . sorrow and mourning will flee” (3rd Advent A). “Immanuel” (4th Advent A).

The preparation for Christ’s coming is reform, and the promise of His coming is reconciliation. The two, furthermore, are linked. If the Messiah comes to restore harmony between nations, people, and even animals (“Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb. . . the baby shall play by the cobra’s den”), then the people of the Messiah are to repent of whatever destroys that harmony. If the Messiah comes to bring justice (“He shall judge the poor with justice and decide aright for the land’s afflicted”), then the people of the Messiah are to work to eliminate injustice. The “justice” referred to in Isaiah 11 is an act of intervention to save the helpless. The “spirit of the Lord” which rests on the Messiah and likewise on His people, leads them to and prepares them for the work of justice, as the structure of this passage indicates. This same Spirit will later be called the Advocate.

Abortion is an injustice against the most helpless, and attacks the harmony of human relationships at their most fundamental and sensitive point, the relationship of mother and child. Preparing for the Lord’s coming therefore requires a total rejection of abortion. The promise of His coming heralds a new harmony between mother and child.

The focus on the Virgin and Child at the end of Advent highlights this.

The Second Vatican Council reflects upon the relationship between the coming of Christ and our activity to prepare for it. In the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, we read, “Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectancy of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come. . . . When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise — human dignity, brotherly communion and freedom — according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom. . . .” (#39). In other words, the spirit of Advent should naturally bolster our pro-life efforts, and the progress we make in promoting human dignity becomes the “building blocks” for the eternal kingdom.

Advent leads the Church to the Silent Night when God Himself is revealed as one of us. This season leads us to the joy of His birth (which, incidentally, is the opening theme of *The Gospel of Life*). If God has joined His nature to ours, how can we ever allow our nature to be despised? If He has come to bring us Divine Life, and will return to take us to the skies, how can it be all right to throw people in the garbage? May His birth shed protection on all about to be born, and as we work to end abortion, may we “wait in joyful hope for the coming of Our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Lime 5

You don’t want to miss this book, *Lime 5*, which devastates the lie that legal abortion is safe. Due in January; inquire at 817-380-8800.

Also look in February for Dr. Bernard Nathanoon’s book *The Hand of God*, the account of his journey from abortion to the Church — Regnery Press, Washington, DC.

Abortion Hurts Women

Fr. Richard M. Hogan, Associate Director

Each year the number of women who have had abortions increases. As these numbers increase, it is becoming more and more clear that these mothers are harmed by abortion.

The most frequently asked questions by women who come to abortion clinics are: "Will this procedure be painful?" and "Is it a baby?" The staff at the abortion mills often lie. They say the procedure will not be painful. How could it not be? The abortion procedure involves ripping a child from the womb. We need to remember that biologically the child is very firmly attached to the mother. The staff of the abortion mills also lie when they tell the women that they are not carrying a baby.

Beginning with the lies, the entire procedure is an attack on women. The mothers who have abortions risk higher rates of infertility, infection, and even death. They risk life-long guilt and depression. And yet they are rarely told this, even when they ask.

It should not surprise us that women are victims of abortion. Objectively, abortion is a very serious sin. Sin hurts the sinner as well as others. We know from Genesis that we are created in God's image and likeness. Created like God, we are called from our very creation to imitate God. We should act like God. This is not an external requirement imposed upon us. Rather, it is internal. It is a requirement stemming from our structure as images of God.

When I see an image of myself in the mirror, the image does what I do.

People, as images of God, should do what God does. Unlike the animals who do not have free will, we can choose to act contrary to the way we are made. However, if we try to act contrary to the way we are made, we try to undo what God did when He created us. We try to make ourselves into something other than images of God. This hurts us. We might compare it to trying to redesign our bodies by amputation. Such an attempt would hurt us. Sin is an attempt to redesign ourselves. It is an attempt to remake ourselves into something other than images of God and it hurts us. For these reasons, Pope John Paul II has said that sin is a suicidal act.¹ If sin is a suicidal act and abortion is a sin, then it is a suicidal act. The more serious the sin, the greater the harm. Sin hurts the sinner. Abortion hurts women very seriously. When we oppose abortion and try to persuade mothers to continue to carry their children, we are trying to protect women from harm. It is not the pro-aborts who are for women, it is we. We love both the child and the mothers and want neither to come to any harm, physical or spiritual.

¹ See Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance*, (December 2, 1984), no. 15.

Priest Profiles

Fr. Thomas Keller

For Fr. Thomas Keller, pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, the news that property next to the local abortion mill was for sale was an opportunity to advance the pro-life cause.

In January 1994 he bought the property, and has established The Life Center. Its statement of purpose reads, "Built by Fr. Thomas Keller for the protection of human life from the moment of conception; for the promotion and protection of spiritual, emotional, and mental life and health, and for the promotion and health of physical life."

The building is used for the state office of Arkansas Right to Life, has a prayer and reading room, contains a mini-gym for recreational exercise, and displays an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Unborn. The building was blessed by Bishop Andrew J. McDonald, Bishop of Little Rock.

Thank you, Fr. Keller, for this very visible and lasting initiative to promote human life, right next to a building that routinely destroys it! Thank you for being one of the many *priests* for life!

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From September 21-23, 1995, the Life Education and Resource Network held their annual convention in Virginia Beach. This network is a national effort to educate and motivate the black community in pro-life issues. This photo shows a few of the many participants in the Conference, including some of our Priests for Life with Fr. Frank Pavone and with Rev. Johnny Hunter, National Director of LEARN (front second from right). For more information on LEARN, write to LEARN, P.O. Box 6357, Virginia Beach, Va 23456 or call 804-579-2833. Priests for Life rejoices to have members from the Black community.

