

Interview of Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI, Bishop Emeritus of San Angelo, Texas with Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director, Priests for Life

Fr. Pavone:

Well hello friends, Father Frank Pavone here, National Director of Priests for life. Welcome to our program on endabortion.tv.

We are so happy to have you with us and today we have a very special guest. I'm so pleased to be introducing one of our bishops here in the United States. Bishop, Michael Pfeiffer. I've known him for many years.

He is the Bishop Emeritus of San Angelo, TX and we have been together on many occasions and I have heard him speak very strongly and very clearly for our youngest brothers and sisters, the children in the womb.

Bishop Pfeiffer, thank you so much for being on the program today and thank you especially for your pastoral leadership over all these years.

Bishop Pfeifer:

Well, I'm grateful to you, Father Frank and I'm very happy to have the opportunity to share some reflections on this, most critical moral issue facing our country, abortion, and also the proposed order as I understand it to even murder precious little babies that survive the brutal procedure of abortion, which is terrible and wanting all taxpayers to pay for that critical and highly immoral procedure.

Fr. Pavone:

It is unbelievable, isn't it? And I wanted to start there Bishop, you recently wrote a pastoral letter that I have here and that we encourage our viewers to read. We will be putting the link to it in the description of these programs and it's titled " Pope Francis says, Abortion is the death penalty for the unborn." And you make many, many important points in here. But as you were just saying I think it's important for us to point out to people that in Catholic teaching the fact that abortion is wrong is a conclusion of human reason, isn't it? I mean, in our faith we teach moral truths that we can know by reason alone and then we teach other truths that we can only know by divine revelation. But this is a pretty basic one, isn't it, that you don't kill babies?

Bishop Pfeifer:

Very true, as I point out in that letter. Father Frank, I mentioned that we have a strong scriptural basis for our belief, and our belief is also confirmed in the last 20 years by medical scientific research about who is present in the womb of a mother and that is true human life. There's no doubt about it and we're told by all the medical research that from the first moment of conception that little cell has all the necessary cells and DNA that that little one boy or girl will need for the rest of his or her life.

So I tell people I no longer believe or just believe that the unborn are precious images of God, but I know it's confirmed from medical research and science that there is true human life there.

Fr. Pavone:

Bishop in your pastoral letter, you make a point and let me quote this. You said” Pope Francis, as popes before him, along with the US Catholic Bishops state that the death of the unborn in abortion is the preeminent life issue of the many life Issues that must be respected, promoted and protected at all stages of life.”

Could you explain a little more -- because I know a lot of our people have heard this -- explain a little more to our viewers why you and so many other bishops are saying that abortion is in fact *the preeminent* issue of our time.

Bishop Pfeifer:

Well, I think it's evident if we use our common reason plus our faith, because we're dealing here with *life*. And as is pointed out in our laws of this country, the first right given to us is life, human life. “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And I'd like to remind our audience here that a good friend of yours and mine also, Alveda King, has pointed out that this is the number one civil issue in our country. To me, and she concurs I know, this is the number one medical, moral, pastoral issue as Catholics and it should be for us Bishops. But it's also confirmed by this great leader, the niece of Doctor King, that this is also a very important civil rights issue, and she says it's the most important one facing our country.

So I think there's every reason there why all the bishops -- and sometimes perhaps our bishops, in my estimation, haven't spoken as strongly as they should have as a body on this issue. But I know that other pro-life people like yourself, Alveda King -- that they say this is the preeminent issue because it's dealing with human life and the most precious human life in the whole world, the unborn, tiny little images of God that are being destroyed in abortion and sadly our President, a Catholic, President Biden, wants to increase this greatest moral evil in our country. He has passed many – as I point out in my pastoral letter -- many presidential orders, actions, and has plans to in multiply and increase abortions in our country, which to me is very, very sad.

Fr. Pavone:

Bishop, let me quote another line from this letter. You said “Biden's executive orders” - and you're referring to those, especially in relation to abortion – “are antithetical to reason, violate human dignity and are completely incompatible with Catholic teaching.” That is, a powerful statement needs to be said. In fact, later on in in that same section you say “Biden with his abortion orders and plans for infanticide has marked himself already to be the most pro-abortion American president in history.”

So Bishop, I know these are words that so many of the faithful want to hear because you're providing clear guidance as a pastor, a shepherd, A church leader is there to provide clear guidance to the to the flock, and these words certainly do that about something that is right in front of our eyes as this as this man who is so much in the news and so many people look to him is doing and saying these things.

Tell us a little bit more about what concerns you in regard to the things Joe Biden is doing in regard to abortion and the funding of abortion.

Bishop Pfeifer:

Well, as you said, I point out in my letter, he's become the most pro-abortion president In the first six months in office compared to other presidents we've ever had. And I'd like to go back to our Holy Father, Pope Francis from whom I take the title of the letter, “abortion is the death penalty for the

unborn.” You know, we pointed out that medical science, our belief as Catholic as Christians, or many Christians who hold this too, that we're dealing here with the precious human life images of God.

And the great Saint John Paul II who named me as a Bishop -- and you knew him also -- in similar words called abortion “Capital punishment for the precious unborn” and called abortion “an unspeakable crime an attack on God himself.”

Of all the sins committed, I believe this is the one that pains Jesus the most, because these are the most precious and innocent of all human beings, and the plan is to kill more and more. And that's terrible. You know, in this age, Fr. Frank, when there are many movements and I support it -- I'm sure you do too -- to deal with capital punishment. Sadly, there are many new efforts by our President and by Congress people wanting to increase the murdering, the killing in capital punishment of these precious unborn and they're given a double sentence. If they survive abortion and they're living, well, our administration and many members of his Congress wants to say it's OK to murder them, that's what it is, to kill them. So it's something that touches not only our faith, but also our reason.

Common sense tells us this and we need to preach this more. And we bishops need to speak more loudly and clearer on this issue, which I wish we had done at our recent conference meeting about a month ago.

And I'll point out that when we Catholic Bishops were meeting by Zoom there, about 250 bishops at the same time, the Southern Baptists had their annual convention and they made a powerful, powerful statement on abortion that I wish we had made as bishops. They put out there “we've resolved that abolishing abortion is the Great Commission issue, and we must call upon all governing authorities to repent and obey everything Christ has commanded us.”

Unanimously, they passed a resolution saying “we favor, of course. abolishing of all abortions” something similar. I wish we had said it; we did talk about many other issues, but I'm so happy to see other Christians who also hold this belief. The Southern Baptists are the biggest Protestant group in the United States and I think we ought to join efforts and more groups like that. Because there are many Christian groups that do support the beautiful life of the unborn and the efforts that we make together.

Fr. Pavone:

Yes, that was a strong statement that they made and thank you for reminding us about that.

OK, so Bishop in this letter something that I really like very much as well is that you outline some points for a national pro-life pastoral plan and strategy. And this is so important because people, when their conscience is awakened about abortion, the natural thing they ask is what can I do? And people, of course are always asking us that here at Priests for Life and we give them projects and activities to do and people are asking what can our church do? What can our Pastor do? And as you know we train priests especially to be more active in Pro life. Could you take us through some of your key suggestions that you outline here for a national pastoral plan and strategy regarding abortion and some of the concrete activities we can do?

Bishop Pfeifer:

I'd be very happy to do that because it's one thing to speak or issue a document on the sacredness of life, the unborn and human life at all levels. But sometimes our people are wondering, well, what can I

do? What should we do? And I believe that because of the circumstances we're in now in our country and because we have a leader who is radically wanting to increase abortions that we bishops need to develop what I call a national pastoral program plan or strategy.

First of all, I stress in that plan that we need prayer.

Prayer is the ultimate tool we have from God to overcome this critical issue. Prayer puts us in contact with the Holy Spirit and without the Holy Spirit we cannot do anything that God wants us to do. But the Holy Spirit is waiting, waiting for us to take action and will support our efforts. I point out there that this should be a plan that would touch every Catholic Parish in the United States and involve all Catholics, Bishops and of course our priests and that we would have days when we would preach on this. We would have in each parish, once a month, a holy hour to beseech our Lord to help us overcome this tremendous evil, and we would have the rosary prayed more often and going out in front of Planned Parenthood centers and other death centers, pray the e rosary there and giving public witness to our belief, to overcome this evil.

I have dealt with Planned Parenthood. I was Bishop of the diocese of San Angelo for 28 years. During that time, with God's help and prayer and involvement of people, we were able to close three Planned Parenthoods -- one in San Angelo, TX, one in Abilene and one in Midland. Prayer is the key.

But we have to take part and pray in front of these centers to give witness and join, like I mentioned, with other Christians to do the same thing. And at a government level we need to involve a constant dialogue with our President and our congress people, because there we can we can influence the laws that are made.

I do want to congratulate Archbishop Joseph Naumann, chairman of the Pro Life Committee for the US bishops who also issued a similar, what I call pastoral plan to overcome those who want to do away with Hyde Amendment. But I go into the letter and say, you know, at a local level we need to contact all of our leaders. Yes, at the top, top offices but also to contact leaders at a national, county and city level.

And I'm happy to hear that there are now 33 Cities in the US that are called sanctuary cities for the unborn. They will not let abortion happen in those in those cities. One or two of those or three, I should say that I know of or in Texas: Lubbock, TX. Sterling City, which was part of my diocese and then another place just last week called Central TX.

Those are full, practical pastoral ways where lay people can be involved and take action.

Guide priests and with our preaching and our religious teachers. We need to teach more strongly about these issues in our program, religious education, of course in school. Not every parish has a Catholic school. But the teacher in all of our religious programs...

In other words, what I'm trying to say now there's other details but for lack of time, I'd like to say that to involve the country. How many are we about 70 million somewhere around there? 69-70 million. If we could bring our Catholic, Southern Baptists and other religious groups, I am positive we could stop plans to increase abortions in country. There's no doubt about this for you, so I'm encouraging that. And I point out in my letter that we have the moral authority from God and we have the moral responsibility from God, and we have the power of the Holy Spirit that's been promised us by Jesus. If we brought that all together, these abortion initiatives would not happen.

Fr. Pavone:

Well, Bishop, as you're explaining all this, I'm reminded of Doctor Bernard Nathanson, who, as you know, was one of the founders of the abortion industry in America and then became Pro life and then ultimately became a Catholic cardinal. John O'Connor baptized him, and I knew him, and he was a friend of Priests for Life.

And he encouraged our work for the very same reasons that you were just articulating, God has given us the tools we need in the church, prayer and grace, and the spiritual power to end the abortion. And he always said to the priests, when speaking of what he and his pro abortion colleagues did, he said to us, "We would have never gotten away with what we did if you had been united, purposeful and strong." I want to thank you for being so clear and purposeful and strong as a Bishop and I'd like to invite you as we conclude here to say a word of encouragement to our priests that are connected with our ministry here at pro-life . And beyond that we have many deacons, as Deacons for Life, who get involved in this and many of them doing some of the things you suggest here, the holy hours for life, the prayers in front of the abortion centers, and so forth. And also, of course, our wonderful lay people who are who are so, so motivated. Could you say a word of encouragement to all of them, especially those that are connected with our Priests for Life ministry?

Bishop Pfeifer:

Well, every priest I'm sure must be for life. The thing is what we need to do is be much more expressive about this, because that's what we're about. We're about human life. Jesus became one of us. The Great Priest. Precisely to touch all, and he's calling all of us bishops and priests -- So I encourage you brother Priests to become much more active in preaching and also in taking action at a local level. Some of the ways I mentioned there's many others and also encourage our good lay people.

I'm finding there are many, many good lay people who are waiting for direction. They were somewhat disappointed that we bishops at our meeting didn't speak more clearly and in a unified way on this.

To the priests that work with you and all of my brother priests -- keep working, keep praying and trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. This is the work of the Lord. We know God wants to protect human life.

The little ones who come to us, we say over and over they're made in the image and likeness of God, and my gosh, if we can't work and sacrifice even give our lives to protect those beautiful images then we are not fulfilling our mission.

But I encourage you and pray for you and encourage, many more priests and people bishops to become involved in this vitally important ministry.

Fr. Pavone:

Bishop Pfeifer, Thank you so much for this pastoral letter which we have linked in our in our video on our platforms and thank you for your clear teaching and encouragement. And would you give our audience the Lord's blessing?

Bishop Pfeifer:

I will and I hope they can see this cross -- this is a cross that was given to me by Saint John Pope St. John Paul II on May 18th the year he died, he and I had the same birthday and he received me in a private audience and I'd like to use this cross to ask God's abundant blessings upon you, your ministry and all of our brother priests and bishops, and all people who are working for this primary issue which is life especially the most fragile, the most innocent of all life, the unborn.

Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus. We ask that you pour out your Holy Spirit upon all these beautiful efforts of Priests for Life, of all priests and bishops, and all our laypeople. Inspire us Dear Holy Spirit, to have hearts that are burning with fire of love for this ministry.

And bless all those who support us. May the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit descend upon us and remain forever Amen. and Mary our mother, the mother of life. Intercede for us. Pray for us. Guide us and direct us. amen

Fr. Pavone:

Amen, Amen. Thank you Bishop. So very much, Bishop Michael Pfeiffer from the Diocese of San Angelo, TX. God bless you.