

An interview with Bishop Thomas Daly of Spokane, WA

Fr. Frank Pavone:

Well, brothers and sisters, I am so pleased today to welcome to our program, His Excellency Bishop Thomas Daly. He is the seventh Bishop of Spokane, Washington. He was originally born in and ordained for the Archdiocese of San Francisco, which also is the birth place of our ministry of Priests For life, and so we always have had a special relationship with San Francisco, and today we're very happy to talk with Bishop Daly about the key issue of abortion. So Bishop, welcome to our program and thanks for speaking to our audience today.

Bishop Daly:

Thank you, Father.

You know the question of abortion being the preeminent issue with all the other major difficulty, struggles, challenges issues that we face. It's because it's so fundamental. I mean, just look at the trouble of the racial divide in our nation. Much of that could be remedied, healed if we go back to the initial foundation, which is the sanctity of life. The dignity of the human person is built upon the sanctity of life, and we're all beloved sons and daughters of God, created in God's image and likeness.

And so, the issue of abortion, how we treat the most vulnerable. In many ways the unborn are the widows and the orphans of the time that Jesus spoke. The people who have no one to watch out for them, but we as the Church. And sometimes people would be critical - that Bishop Daly seems to be ignoring these other issues - why is he - why did he speak up on abortion issues when there's so many others? Because it is the foundational issue. And when a culture ignores the most vulnerable, not only ignores but destroys, everything else after that unravels. So it is clearly the preeminent choice and how we defend the unborn child, how we help the expectant mother.

Father, you and I both know when we hear confessions, we see the hurt and the pain that is common. When I used to teach, I taught high school for most of my priesthood, Marin Catholic for 19 years of my 24 years, before becoming a pastor, a Bishop, and when we would teach the respect life issues, the students would be, you know, there's always a controversy, you know. You know why does the Church do this? What about pro-choice? And every student would be so attentive when I would say that priests hear the most confessions on abortion. And they would listen attentively. I said around Christmas, before Christmas. A kid would put up a hand - *Because Christmas is about the child Jesus.*

And so I think they know and we all know and science has proven this, the dignity of the unborn. So it is the foundational issue from which the dignity of the human person arises from that and much of our trouble in our society has come because it's the direct result. We have

ignored it. We have lied about and have allowed the destruction of human life. It's no wonder then everything else unravels after that. So that is why it's the preeminent issue.

Fr. Frank Pavone:

Exactly and Bishop, we're so grateful to you and so many other bishops who have been emphasizing this point. And as you know when you do that - your own witness - and I can tell you this from what we hear from people all around the country - goes well beyond the boundaries of your own diocese. It's a witness that is appreciated throughout the country and is encouraging to people throughout the country.

Bishop also, you know our ministry at Priests for Life is very much focused on providing reconciliation and healing to those who have had abortions as of course, is the focus of the entire Church. Could you give a word of encouragement and invitation to those who are wounded by abortion and aren't so sure whether the Lord or the Church are ready to welcome them back?

Bishop Daly:

I think you know Father, that's an excellent point. You know, God in his love and mercy has given that great Sacrament to the church, and I still hear confessions, though not as numerous as I did when I was a parish priest. But God doesn't want us to remain in sin and suffering. He wants to heal us and he wants to bring his hope, and that's why the Sacrament of reconciliation and how so important it is that as priests and as bishops, we speak often about God's love and his mercy and no sin is so great that God can't forgive us, and it takes humility. A woman last year came up to me to cathedral. She had carried around the sin of abortion for years and when she finally went to confession and she was told she was forgiven there was this great burden because she didn't think God loved her and she made that mistake at a time when she thought she had no other options and there was pressure.

So I would invite any woman or a man who's been a part of abortion to please humbly seek God, mercy and forgiveness and what will follow is a healing and a peace. I think, as a as a priest and a Bishop, the two sacraments that are so powerfully available, the ones that we most frequently can receive are the Eucharist and reconciliation, and Christ gave it to his church for exactly the reason that people just humbly say.. I went to confession and recently in the priest said, *look at Peter, don't focus on sins committed, but sins confessed and forgiven*. And I think that is a great way to frame it, so I would just encourage priests. Some priests, as you know, are better confessors than others, but it is just so important that people not remain in sin, but rather be healed through humble acknowledgement of sin, and also the reception of the grace and Mercy of God. Very powerful.

Fr. Frank Pavone:

And as you say Bishop and we find this in our in our Rachel's Vineyard Ministry and Silent No More. You mentioned the men as well as the women. that they're both deeply affected and wounded by abortion. And they're coming forward more and more, the men are coming forward more and more, which is good to see.

Bishop Daly, in your pastoral work, what have you found to be some of the most effective methods and tools in dealing with the whole issue of abortion?

Bishop Daly:

It's interesting. When I was president of Marin Catholic, I think it was in the Fall of 04. I think a junior named Mary Delahanty was a junior in high school and along with the teacher Colleen McGuigan, whose mom is Barbara McGuigan. Now Colleen is a young theology teacher. A group of students formed a respect life club - I believe it was the first respect Life club in the Archdiocese of San Francisco - in the high school. And then of course first with girls, then boys joined. But I think teaching what life is about. The big thing, follow the science. Just show pictures of the developing baby, I think. Education and truth.

Because I remember a presentation from Monsignor Smith, I used to show it in class. He was a moral theologian at the seminary at Dunwoodie and he talked about the devil being a murderer and a liar, and he said it's no coincidence that those two are linked together, and that's what abortion is. It is murder and it is a lie.

I think the most powerful witnesses of life issues are young women because typically opponents want to say this is a group of men, of priests, of people who don't know the real world. Well, take a young high school girl or college girl or a young woman and let them take the lead. You know, guided and inspired by our example, but do so and I think that's the most powerful. It's education and it's mercy. The truth will set us free, if they just know what it is. I think the church has done a remarkable job, at least here in Washington, especially here in Spokane, where we have preparers, which is a kind of support for the expectant mother and father. It had its roots here in in Spokane.

So I think that is a very important way - education, especially with our young people. We knew of that terrible thing that happened to the former boys high school. The Archdiocese in San Francisco with a pro-life speaker and students walked out and from what I'm told it was organized by a couple of faculty members and students who had transferred from a former Catholic girls' school and I just wondered, what were they taught there? Because clearly in the interviews they said, well, we taught that our bodies are our own and we are responsible for them. And I thought, you were not taught the truth and so the truth will set us free.

Fr. Frank Pavone:

Amen to that and Bishop final question and thank you for your time today.

Could you give a word of encouragement to the many priests, deacons, and lay people who are involved with our ministry of Priests for Life and who want to do more to help the unborn and their moms and dads?

Bishop Daly:

Yes, I just see it, as I mentioned at the beginning of this interview, that the life issues are fundamental. If we abandoned our commitment to the unborn everything else will follow. We'll have domestic violence, we'll have abuse. I would encourage priests and laity and our deacons and religious to have pro-life groups in your parishes. We have a pro-life walk that started in January of '16. A group of very strong lay people assisted in this and it was their leadership. I think every diocese should have a strong pro-life group because if we don't as the Church speak for life, I'm afraid no one else will.

And just look at this whole thing about politics, people defining themselves as devout Catholics, and yet they are pushing for the expansion of abortion. You cannot. It's the fundamental issue. So we can do so much as priests and bishops. But the laity in their role, their witness, their voting in the world is so important.

Fr. Frank Pavone:

Thank you so much and Bishop could we conclude by having you give us Your blessing please.

Bishop Daly:

Sure.

The Lord be with you.

(And with your spirit.)

Father, we ask your blessings upon Father and his ministry, the Priests for Life, but most especially, we ask for your blessings on all people, especially the unborn, expectant mothers and fathers, we pray that we will build and strengthen a culture of life here in our country. So that as we celebrate shortly the birth of our Savior Jesus at Christmas, the Child Jesus may remind us of the hope, the sanctity and the dignity of the human person, and we make this prayer, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

God bless you Father, thank you!

Fr. Frank Pavone:

Amen, God bless you, Bishop Thomas Daley of Spokane, Washington. Thanks so much for spending some time with us today.