

TWENTY SEVENTH SUNDAY PER ANNUM, Year A

“RESPECT LIFE SUNDAY”

The first Sunday of October, often referred to as *Respect Life Sunday*, provides the opportunity for us to remember that every human life is a precious and irreplaceable gift of almighty God.

Pope Francis recently stated that:

“even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.”ⁱ

The CDF’s 1987 Instruction on Bioethics, *Donum vitae*, states:

“From the moment of conception, the life of every human being is to be respected in an absolute way because man is the only creature on earth that God has ‘wished for himself’ and the spiritual soul of each man is ‘immediately created’ by God; his whole being bears the image of the Creator. Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves ‘the creative action of God’ and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can, in any circumstance, claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.”ⁱⁱ

Every human life is sacred. The teaching of the Church is clear. But so many people, Catholics included, can be so influenced by the ‘culture of death’ that their minds are clouded to the truth. We need to make it clear to our children and our children’s children, that each and every human person, from conception to natural death, is to be treated with the utmost respect.

Fr. John Hardon said that the 20th Century was the most violent of all the eras of the human race. If you look at human history, there have been all sorts of injustices of man toward man. No matter how brutal the ancient world may seem to us, it was nowhere near as destructive as what our world is doing now in the destruction of human life! Let’s look at the major issues we face:

Abortion – the direct and purposeful taking of the life of an unborn child – is the most important issue we face in our country and throughout the world. Since 1973, over 55 million babies have been lost in this country alone. How does this compare to the loss of people due to war in this country? Let’s have a look:

The Civil War	498,332 deaths
World War I	116,708 deaths
World War II	407,316 deaths
Korea	25,604 deaths
Vietnam	58,168 deaths

Abortions are currently at 55 million. That’s 64 times as many deaths by abortion than by war!

Mother Teresa of Calcutta: “We must not be surprised when we hear of murders, of killings, or war, of hatred. If a mother can kill her own child, what is left but for us to kill each other?”

Just in case you think that Catholics are not at fault here, I decided to look at the abortion statistics in relation to religion:

Protestant:	37.4% of abortions in the USA
Catholic:	31.3%
None:	24.2%
Other:	6.1%
Jewish:	1%

This is a huge issue across the board. We need to be clear about the Church’s teaching and why we hold sacred every human life.

Related to the holocaust of abortion is the path of destruction it leaves behind for the mother and those who have cooperated in the act of abortion. Saint John Paul II gave the following words of encouragement (*Evangelium Vitae*, n. 99):

“I would now like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion... do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope... the Father of mercies is ready to give you His forgiveness and His peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.”

Contraception – Fr. John Hardon made a direct link between abortion and contraception: every culture that used contraceptives was also an aborting culture. Without fail!

It follows that, if we are sincere about praying for the end of abortion, then we must stop using contraceptives! Each and every conjugal act within marriage, if it is to be life-giving to the spouses, must be open to the possibility of new life.

Sterilization – This is a huge problem today. Just because things are possible through the technology we have at our disposal does not mean that they are morally acceptable.

Pornography – is so prevalent today due to the internet. We all need to be vigilant. This is destructive to marriages, to relationships in general, and involves the exploitation of others.

Euthanasia – or “mercy killing” is defined as “an action or an omission which of itself or by intention causes death, in order that all suffering may in this way be eliminated.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Embryonic and Stem Cell Research – involves the unjust use of human beings at the very beginning of life.

“Because every human life is sacred, our Church embraces scientific and medical advances that save lives, cure diseases, and improve health, as long as those advances are not made by exploiting, harming, or killing another member of our human family.”^{iv}

Adult stem cell research has yielded up at around 70 known cures. To my knowledge, not one has been found from embryonic stem cell research!

Infertility and In Vitro Fertilization – many couples have great difficulty in conceiving a child and try to make use of *In Vitro* technology to help them. The Church teaches that In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) is immoral.

“Catholic teaching prohibits in vitro fertilization, maintaining that a child has the right to be conceived in the marital embrace of his [or her] parents. Human sexuality has two components, the unitive and procreative; IVF separates these components and makes the procreative its only goal. ...

There are other issues involved. IVF makes the child a commodity produced in a laboratory, and makes doctors, technicians, and even business people part of the conception process. The sperm used is usually obtained by masturbation, which the Church teaches is immoral. The sperm or eggs used may not come from the couple desiring the child; because one of the spouses may be infertile, it may be necessary to use the sperm or eggs from an outsider. Most of the embryos conceived—which the Church holds should be respected new human lives—die, are frozen indefinitely for later implantation, are used for research, or are discarded. Children conceived through IVF also have a greater incidence of birth defects.”^v

Same Sex Unions – this is a huge issue in our age. Certain minority groups in our society want to promote same sex unions as equivalent to marriage according to God’s plan, which is the loving union of one man and one woman for life. Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life and can in no circumstances be approved. (CCC, n. 2357)

Persons with a same sex attraction are to be ‘accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.’ (CCC, n. 2358) We are called to love them and pray that they will pursue lives of self-mastery and chastity.

Chastity Education – It is clear that education in chastity is key. This applies to the education of our youth as well as our own ongoing education as adults. We are all responsible for one another. We owe it to God and to one another to help our brothers and sisters in promoting a culture of life.

We are members of the ‘Pro-Life Generation’. May God the Father, who gave us life itself, help us to do all we can to promote the dignity of human life from conception to natural death!

ⁱ Pope Francis, *2013 Day for Life greeting*, as quoted in the October 2, 2014 edition of ‘The Catholic Times’ (Diocese of La Crosse), p. 5

ⁱⁱ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Feb 22, 1987, *Instruction on Bioethics, Donum vitae*, n. 5

ⁱⁱⁱ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1980, *Declaration on Euthanasia, Iura et vita*, n. 2

^{iv} Virginia Bishops’ Pastoral Letter, *Science at the Service of Life*, as found at <http://www.vacatholic.org/church-teaching/life-issues.php>

^v http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/1774/church_teaching_on_in_vitro_fertilization.aspx