



Message of the Catholic Organization for Life and Family on the occasion of the 2012 National March for Life

The Urgent Need to Build a Culture of Life

We live in an age and in a country which place enormous importance on the concept of “rights” – rights which, regrettably, are very often understood completely apart from the *obligations* which they ought to entail. Surely my rights, your rights, stop where the rights of our neighbors begin! But “who”—asks the Gospel of St. Luke —“is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:25).

Every year in Canada, some 100 000 of our most vulnerable neighbors are sacrificed on the altar of “choice”—as the exercise of what some misguidedly consider a “right”. Among those aborted in the last year alone we might have counted a future prime minister or a groundbreaking scientist, a playmate for our children, or our future son or daughter-in-law.

The unborn child is, in fact, my neighbor and must be respected as a person from the moment of conception. As science demonstrates, even at the earliest stage of development each child in the womb is a unique and completely irreplaceable human being. We should therefore work tirelessly to insure that our laws are reformed in order to reflect the humanity and the fundamental right to life of our tiniest neighbors. This is our obligation as free and responsible citizens. *This* is what we owe our neighbor!

History has shown repeatedly that where the right to life of the unborn is not protected other rights are sooner or later mocked. One need only consider the recent claim by a number of medical ethicists associated with Oxford University (England)—that newborn babies have no “moral right to life”— to see where the logic of a pro-abortion culture leads: Infanticide becomes acceptable.

Abortion Hurts us All

Those who falsely uphold the so-called “right” to abortion forget one simple fact: ultimately, abortion benefits no one! The most obvious and most appalling consequence of abortion is the squandering of innocent human life. But the destructive impact of abortion does not end there. For the woman who submits to abortion there are nearly always profoundly negative consequences. Every year, more and more cases of “post-abortion syndrome” attest to this truth. Ongoing research has shown that fathers of aborted children, too, often find themselves experiencing profound feelings of loss and isolation. The surviving siblings of aborted children often feel guilty for simply existing and frequently suffer from depression and crippling sadness; this phenomenon has come to be called “abortion survivors’ syndrome”. In other instances, the grandparents of aborted children are profoundly affected by a sense of betrayal and loss.

What of our society as a whole? In his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, Blessed John Paul II warned that abortion poses “an immense threat to life: not only to the life of individuals but also to that of civilization itself.”¹ In one way or another, every one of us is impoverished by the culture of death that surrounds and threatens to infect us. A society which tolerates abortion is a society which makes the human being a mere means to an end. A society which continues to tolerate the destruction of its *weakest members* is one which will inevitably tolerate the destruction of the *relatively weak*, the disabled, the sick, the marginalized and the inconvenient. Can anyone be safe and truly flourish in such a society?

Choosing Life

The challenges which confront us are sometimes overwhelming. But we need to recall that change comes one person at a time. Being pro-life means respecting human life at every stage of development and in every circumstance. If our message is to be heard, we need to take account of our own attitudes and way of life. The most immediate way we change things for the better is by insuring that we are consistent in our own actions. We need to ask ourselves, “Does the way I live my daily life help to create a culture of life?”

There are signs of hope that a genuine culture of life is beginning to flower around us. Earlier this year, in a comprehensive report entitled “Not to be Forgotten – Care of Vulnerable Canadians”, 55 Members of Parliament, representing all political parties, offered a comprehensive and reassuring pro-life look at palliative care and end of life issues. Recent polls have consistently shown that more than half of Canadians believe that human life should be protected before birth.² Clearly, it is the time to bring pressure to bear on our legislators to reopen the public debate on abortion. Let’s begin by making it clear to our Members of Parliament that we support the efforts of MP Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre) to have Parliament revisit the scientific evidence regarding the humanity of the unborn.

See you on Parliament Hill on May 10th! Together, let us march for life!

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COLF is co-sponsored by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus

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¹ Blessed John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 59.

² See for instance Environics Research <http://www.lifecanada.org/2011> and Angus Reid Public Opinion (2012) <http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/44310/canadians-call-for-legislation-to-deal-with-gender-based-abortion/>