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ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

JANUARY 2012

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 1

My Own Private Liturgy
JOHN J. FLYNN III

Rachel's Cry
BISHOP NORMAN McFARLAND

Being Human
in an Age of
Disbelief
ARCHBISHOP CHARLES
CHAPUT



RACHEL'S CRY

BISHOP NORMAN McFARLAND

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 1997



Those of us who have the opportunity to participate in daily Eucharist are given a rude awakening in the Liturgy that follows fast upon Christmas each

year. After the warm glow of the stable bathed in Angel light, we are jarred just days later by the harrowing gospel account of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt, and the ruthless slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem consequent upon barbarous King Herod's mad stratagem to destroy the Child. John Lynch in his epic poem, A Woman Wrapped in Silence, describes Joseph's bewilderment at the Angel's impassioned urging:

*"Fly! Fly! Take the Child and fly!"
 He'd heard it said. And had not failed to mark The urgency
 and rushed relentless import
 In the cry and unbelievably
 The last, chaotic words he'd heard burned white Against the
 startled darkness of his mind
 In searing flame he felt of blasphemy.
 To destroy Him. It was what they said!
 To destroy Him! He that was a Babe
 Who might have been the thunder for a darker Sinai! Who
 had chosen Infancy
 And hands that could not strike, and Who had been Content
 with helplessness for panoply*

It was not an idle warning: all too soon upon the Angel's startling words innocent blood began to flow in "little town of Bethlehem," and Saint Matthew references the prophet Jeremiah's sad wail: A cry was heard at Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel be-wailing her children; no comfort for her, since they are no more. I once read somewhere that, given the estimated population of slightly more than one thousand persons in the Bethlehem of that day, and with approximately one half of the children being girls, Herod's "massacre of all the boys two years old and under in Bethlehem and its environs" probably took twenty

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IDEALS OF ST. THOMAS MORE

The legal profession is a high calling with corresponding responsibilities to society. The principal objective of every lawyer is to promote and seek justice. Catholic Lawyers pursue the truth in both their spiritual and professional lives. The duty of a Catholic lawyer is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, His Church and its teachings at all times despite the personal consequences.

THE OBJECTIVES OF STMS

- encouraging its members to live a Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- promoting and foster high ethical principals in the legal profession generally and, in particular, in the community of Catholic lawyers.
- assisting in the spiritual growth of its members.
- encouraging interfaith understanding and brotherhood.
- sponsoring the annual Red Mass for

elected and appointed officials and members of the legal profession.

MEMBERSHIP IN STMS

Each member of the Society is committed to:

- strive to live an exemplary Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their daily lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- attend monthly meeting of the Society and provide personal support to the St. Thomas More Society.
- attend and support the Red Mass.

LAWYER'S PRAYER

Give me the grace, Good Lord, to set the world at naught; to set my mind fast upon thee and not to hang upon the blast of men's mouths; to be content to be solitary; not to long for worldly company but utterly to cast off the world and rid my mind of the business thereof.
 - ST. THOMAS MORE

EDITOR@STTHOMASMORE.NET

MY OWN PRIVATE LITURGY

JOHN J. FLYNN III

(With Apologies to Gus Van Sant and William Shakespeare)

The changes to the liturgy are now upon us. While we are still in the Keystone Kops phase of implementation, perhaps the time is opportune for reflection on the form of the liturgy, and the spirit it is intended to express.

Soon after I returned to the Catholic Church in 1992, I developed the impression that I might be expected to choose sides over the Tridentine and Novus Ordo masses. Perhaps because of an inborn insensitivity to theological nuance, or worse, the debate over the form of the liturgy seemed to me then, and now, to be a matter of utter indifference, so long as the Mass is said reverently, and in conformity with the law of the Church.

Nevertheless, I watched the contest unfold with perverse fascination, one group labeling the other reactionaries or heretics. The more I learned about the grounds of the debate, the more indifferent I grew. This, I suppose, could be counted against me as a failure. Time will tell.

The difference of perspective on occasion produces open conflict. Several years ago, we were treated to the spectacle of a pastor and parishioners in Orange County warring over whether to stand or kneel at the Agnus Dei. I vastly prefer kneeling at that moment, but, according to the law of the Church, the Bishop has the right to decide whether we stand or kneel. So, if the Bishop directs those in his jurisdiction to stand, we stand. If we suffer because we are inclined to do otherwise, then we suffer for the sake of unity; we suffer for the Church. The liturgy is not a matter of personal taste or style; it is a matter of divine law.

The debates over liturgical form are nearly always angry debates. Anger, we are told, is a sin, a simple enough moral truth, but there is an apparent exception for “righteous anger,” a proposition with which, in the abstract, one can hardly disagree. But how is someone in the grip of anger in the right state of mind to judge whether the anger is really righteous? When we are “righteously angry,” we normally invoke the example of Jesus throwing out the money-changers from the Temple. If that is a comparison with which you are comfortable, more power to you. When I have attempted once or twice to suggest to myself that the comparison was warranted, it seemed to me self-evidently absurd, and I say that as one whose capacity for self-deception is nearly unlimited.

As Pope Benedict XVI wrote, while still known as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, there is a “Spirit of the Liturgy.” The



language and the structure of the Mass are intended to express that spirit. It is the same spirit, we hope, that animates all of the Church, and every movement of reform and renewal:

Without question, moreover, I do not believe that problems of structure are in themselves the most important. I do not believe that structural reforms, about which there has been much debate for some years, are ever the main part of a program that must aim at the only true renewal, spiritual renewal. I even fear that the present-day inflation of such projects and discussions furnishes an all-too convenient alibi to avoid it. The conciliar formula “Ecclesia semper purificanda” seems to me as to others “much superior to the “Ecclesia semper reformanda” which is used so extensively nearly everywhere.” But I do believe, on the other hand, that any disturbance, any change, or any relaxation of the essential structure of the Church would suffice to endanger all spiritual renewal.

*(Henri de Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 33, emphasis in original.)*

So, we walk the fine line.

Perfect fidelity to the mechanics and externalities of the Rite will gain us nothing if the only gift we bring to the altar is our self-declared righteousness. Fidelity to the liturgy depends upon the dispositions of our hearts: “Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24.) It is our hearts we bring to the altar: forgiveness, humility, compassion and repentance are the gifts we bring. ♦

MCLE SEMINAR

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

Join us for our annual MCLE event covering the three topics of ethics, bias and substance abuse.

8:00 am - Mass with Fr. Hugh Barbour, O.Praem., Prior, St. Michael's Abbey

8:30 am - Registration & Continental Breakfast

9:00 am - Elimination of Bias in the Legal Profession, Hon. Andrew Guilford, U.S. District Court

10:10 am - Prevention, Detection, & Treatment of Substance Abuse or Mental Illness that Impairs Professional Competence, Ron Moore, Esq., Attorney and Forensic Scientist

11:20 am - Ethics in the Legal Profession, Louis W. Karlin, Esq., Deputy Attorney General, Co-ed. of Thomas More's Trial By Jury, A Guide for Modern Lawyers

If you have any questions, please contact Deborah Knefel.



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(714) 287-7897 Cell

Where: Jilio - Ryan & Hunter
14661 Franklin Avenue
Tustin, CA 92780

When: Saturday January 28, 2012 from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM PST

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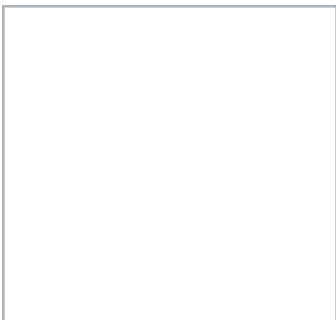
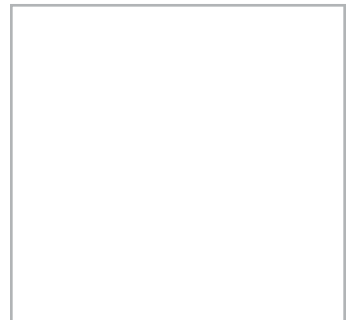
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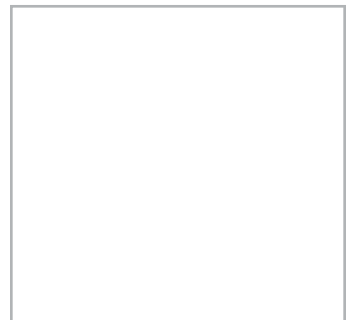


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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTH	DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
January	Wed., Jan 18, 12:00 p.m.	Lunch meeting. Astrid Bennett Gutierrez, MEV: "True Appreciation of My Catholic Faith Led Me to the Pro-Life Movement."	Jilio-Ryan Hunter & Olsen 14661 Franklin, #150 Tustin, California <i>jilioryan.com</i>
	Sun., Jan 22, 8:30 - 11:00 a.m.	Come to help cook and serve the homeless of the community.	Isaiah House 316 S. Cypress Avenue Santa Ana, CA 92701 (714) 835-6304
	Sat., Jan 28, 8:00 a.m.	MCLE Event (3 hours: ethics, bias and substance abuse). Mass at 8:00 a.m., program and discussion 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Jilio-Ryan Hunter & Olsen (same as above)
March	March 5-16, 2012	Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, led by spiritual director Fr. Hugh Barbour. Contact Greg Weiler or Hon. David Belz for more information.	



JANUARY SPEAKER

ASTRID BENNETT GUTIERREZ, MEV

of Los Angeles where she assists Monsignor Timothy O'Connell with the formation of Hispanic Respect Life committees.

She is a co-host, along with Janet Morana and Teresa Tomeo of the new EWTN series, *The Catholic View for Women*. Astrid has also appeared on Hispanic National religious and secular networks such as CNN, Univision and NBC affiliate Telemundo, sometimes debating Planned Parenthood. She hosts a weekly radio program on ESNE Radio (El Sembrador Ministries) entitled *Viviendo la Cultura de la Vida* (Living the Culture of Life) and is a frequent guest on "Guadalupe Radio" and the Evangelical network "Almavision". She has appeared in the first two seasons of EWTN's *Defending Life* series in Spanish "Defendiendo la Vida."

Currently, she is also serving as the chairwoman of Californians for Parental Rights. When majoring in European Studies at UCLA, Astrid envisioned her education would lead to a teaching career, with summers free to be spent traveling in Europe. She never imagined she would be showing up for work every day in the same impoverished, rough and tumble neighborhood she lived in as a child.

"Whatever plans I thought I had for myself went out the window when my eyes were opened to the wanton taking of innocent life through abortion," recalls Astrid. "I knew I had to get off the sidelines and do what I could to save innocent lives and provide aid and comfort to women facing crisis pregnancies." ♦

Ms. Gutierrez is the Executive Director of Los Angeles Pregnancy Services (LAPS.), a pregnancy help center located in L.A.'s abortion ground zero. She is a member of the Missionaries of the Gospel of Life (MEV), the lay association of Priests for Life. She is also President of Hispanics for Life and Human Rights. Astrid is a member of the Commission for Catholic Life Issues of the Archdiocese

BEING HUMAN IN AN AGE OF DISBELIEF

**MOST REV. CHARLES J. CHAPUT, O.F.M., CAP, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA**

Most of my sources in this essay are not Catholic. That shouldn't be surprising. Catholics have no monopoly on respect for human dignity. Catholics do have a very long tradition of thinking about the nature of the human person and society, but I'd like to begin by setting the proper framework for our discussion.

Last year I had the good fortune to read Eric Metaxas's wonderful book, *Bonhoeffer*. It's a biography of the great Lutheran theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I've quoted Bonhoeffer's work many times over the years. The reason is simple. I admire him. He could have been a professor. Instead he chose to be a pastor. He could have had a sterling academic career of lecturing about his ideas and his faith. Instead he chose to put them into action and to immerse himself in people's lives. He was a man not of "values" in the meager modern sense, but of virtues in the classical and religious sense--the virtues of justice, courage, and love, all grounded in the deep virtue of faith in a loving God.

The Third Reich hanged Bonhoeffer for his resistance activities just a few weeks before the end of the Second World War. Today we see him--rightly--as one of the great moral witnesses of the last century; a man who fought for the good, in the face of very grave evil, at the cost of his life.

Another great moral witness of the twentieth century was the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who began as an atheist but ended Russian Orthodox. His history of *The Gulag Archipelago*, in its indictment of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and the brutality of Soviet repression that grew naturally from their thought, is a masterpiece of modern literature. Like Bonhoeffer, Solzhenitsyn wrote from direct experience of imprisonment and organized inhumanity. Unlike Bonhoeffer, Solzhenitsyn survived the war, survived years in prison camps, and was eventually exiled to the West.

In 1978, four years after Solzhenitsyn left Russia, Harvard University asked him to speak to its graduating students. What Harvard may have expected was praise for Western abundance, freedom, and diversity. What it got was very different.

Solzhenitsyn began by noting that Harvard's motto is *Veritas*. This is the Latin word for "truth." Then he added that "truth is seldom pleasant; it is almost invariably bitter."

Then he spent the next 6,000 words saying what nobody wanted to hear. He methodically criticized Western cowardice and self-indulgence; the vanity and weakness of America's



intellectual classes; the "tilt of freedom in the direction of evil;" the right of people "not to have their divine souls stuffed with gossip, nonsense [and] vain talk" by the mass media; a pervasive Western atmosphere of legalism and moral mediocrity; and the rise of a destructive individualism that now forces decent people "to defend not so much human rights as human obligations."

Some of Solzhenitsyn's hard words came from his suffering. Some flowed from loneliness for his own country. But while Solzhenitsyn was harsh in his comments at Harvard, he also was accurate in at least some of what he said. Speaking of his Russian homeland he said, "After suffering decades of violence and oppression, the human soul longs for things higher, warmer and purer" than anything offered by the practical atheism now common in the West.

The reason for the problems of the West, said Solzhenitsyn, is found "at the root, at the very basis of human thinking in the past [several] centuries." Our culture has fallen away from our own biblically informed heritage. We've lost the foundation for our moral vocabulary. This loss has starved our spirit, debased our sense of any higher purpose to life, and destroyed our ability to defend or even to explain any special dignity we assigned to the human person in the past.

Now I've said all of this to give a context for four simple points I'd like to share. I'll be brief.

Here's my first point. We remember Bonhoeffer, Solzhenitsyn, and other men and women like them because of their moral witness. But the whole idea of "moral witness" comes from the assumption that good and evil are real, and that certain basic truths about humanity don't change. These truths are knowable and worth defending. One of these truths is the notion of man's special dignity as a creature of reason and will. Man is part of nature, but also distinct from it.

The philosopher Hans Jonas said that three things have distinguished human life from other animal experience since early prehistory: the tool, the image, and the grave. The tool imposes man's knowledge and will onto nature. The image--man's paintings and other art--projects his imagination. It implies a sense of beauty and memory, and a desire to express them. But the greatest difference between humans and other animals is the grave. Only man buries his dead. Only man knows his own mortality. And knowing that he will die, only man can ask where he came from, what his life means, and

what comes after it.

The grave then is an expression of reverence and hope. When Christians and other people of good will talk about “the dignity of the human person” and “the sanctity of human life,” they’re putting into words what we all instinctively know—and have known for a very long time. Something elevated and sacred in men and women demands our special respect. When we violate that human dignity, we do evil. When we serve it, we do good. And therein lies one of many ironies. We live in a society that speaks persuasively about protecting the environment and rescuing species on the brink of extinction. But then it tolerates the killing of unborn children and the abuse of human fetal tissue as lab material.

This leads me to my second point. The University of Pennsylvania is one our

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country’s premier research universities. That’s a great gift to the Philadelphia community. It’s also a great privilege for all of you as students, especially those specializing in the sciences. Science and technology have expanded human horizons and improved human life in vital ways over the last century. They’ve also, at times, done the opposite.

Part of a good education is learning the skill of appropriate skepticism. And that skepticism, that healthy wariness, should apply even to the methods and

claims of science and technology. When a distinguished and thoroughly secular scholar like Neil Postman writes that “the uncontrolled growth of technology destroys the vital sources of our humanity. It creates a culture without a moral foundation. It undermines certain mental processes and social relations that make human life worth living” -- then we need to be concerned.

There’s a proverb worth remembering here: “To a man with a hammer, every problem is a nail.” If modern man is scientific man, technology is his hammer. But every problem isn’t a nail. Knowledge without the virtues of wisdom, prudence, and, above all, humility to guide it is not just unhelpful. It’s dangerous. Goethe’s poem, *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*—which some of us probably know from the Mickey Mouse cartoon based on it—sticks in our memories for a reason. We’re never as smart as we think we are, and we have a bad track record when it comes to preventing the worst uses of our own best discoveries.

Science involves the study of the material world. But human beings are more than the sum of their material processes. Trying to explain the human person with thinking that excludes the reality of the spiritual, the dignity of the religious, and the possibility of God simply cripples both the scientist and the subject being studied--man himself. To put it another way, we can destroy what we mean by humanity while claiming, and even intending, to serve it.

We might wisely remember one other fact about science. Eric Cohen observed that “From the beginning, science was driven both by democratic pity and aristocratic guile, by the promise to help humanity and the desire to be free from the constraints of the common man, with his many myths and superstitions and taboos.” In other words, scientists too often have a divided heart: a sincere desire to serve man’s knowledge, and a sincere disdain for what they see as the moral and religious delusions of real men

and women. If this doesn’t make us just a little bit uneasy, it should. Both faith and science claim to teach with a special kind of authority. One of the differences is this. Most religious believers accept, at least in theory, that they’ll be judged by the God of justice for their actions. For science, God is absent from the courtroom.

This leads to my third point. God also is absent from the U.S. Constitution—but not because he’s unwelcome. In effect, God suffused the whole constitutional enterprise. Nearly all the Founders were religious believers, and some were quite devout. Their writings are heavily influenced by biblical language, morality, and thought.

America could afford to be secular in the best sense, precisely because its people were so religious. The Founders saw religious faith as something separate from government but vital to the nation’s survival. In his Farewell Address, Washington famously stressed that “religion and morality are indispensable supports” for political prosperity. He added that “reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.” For John Adams, John Jay, James Wilson, Alexander Hamilton, Charles Carroll, George Washington, and most of the other Founders—including Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin—religion created virtuous citizens. And only virtuous citizens could sustain a country as delicately balanced in its institutions, moral instincts, and laws as the United States.

Here’s my purpose in mentioning this. The American Founders presumed the existence of natural law and natural rights. These rights are inalienable and guaranteed by a Creator; by “nature’s God,” to use the words of the Declaration of Independence. Such ideas may be out of fashion in much of legal theory today. But these same ideas are

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very much alive in the way we actually reason and behave in our daily lives.

Most of us here tonight believe that we have basic rights that come with the special dignity of being human. These rights are inherent to human nature. They're part of who we are. Nobody can take them away. But if there is no Creator, and nothing fundamental and unchangeable about human nature, and if "nature's God" is kicked out of the conversation, then our rights become the product of social convention. And social conventions can change. So can the definition of who is and who isn't "human."

The irony is that modern liberal democracy needs religion more than religion needs modern liberal democracy. American public life needs a framework friendly to religious belief because it can't support its moral claims about freedom and rights with secular arguments alone. In fact, to the degree that it encourages a culture of unbelief, liberal democracy undermines its own grounding. It causes its own decline by destroying the public square's moral coherence.

That leads to my fourth and final point. The pro-life movement needs to be understood and respected for what it is: part of a much larger, consistent, and morally worthy vision of the dignity of the human person. You don't need to be Christian or even religious to be "pro-life." Common sense alone is enough to make a reasonable person uneasy about what actually happens in an abortion. The natural reaction, the sane and healthy response, is repugnance.

What makes abortion so grievous is the intimacy of the violence and the

innocence of the victim. Dietrich Bonhoeffer--and remember this is the same Lutheran pastor who helped smuggle Jews out of Germany and gave his life trying to overthrow Hitler--wrote that the "destruction of the embryo in the mother's womb is a violation of the right to live which God has bestowed on this nascent life. To raise the question whether we are here concerned already with a human being or not is merely to confuse the issue. The simple fact is that God certainly intended to create a human being and that this nascent human being has been deliberately deprived of his life. And that is nothing but murder."

Bonhoeffer's words embody Christian belief about the sanctity of human life present from the earliest years of the Church. Rejection of abortion and infanticide was one of the key factors that set the early Christians apart from the pagan world. From the *Didache* in the First Century through the Early Fathers of the Church, down to our own day, Catholics--and until well into the twentieth century all other Christians--have *always* seen abortion as gravely evil. As Bonhoeffer points out, arguing about whether abortion is homicide or only something close to homicide is irrelevant. In the Christian view of human dignity, intentionally killing a developing human life is *always* inexcusable and *always* gravely wrong.

Working against abortion doesn't license us to ignore the needs of the homeless or the poor, the elderly or the immigrant. It doesn't absolve us from supporting women who find themselves pregnant or abandoned. All human life, no matter how wounded, flawed, young or old, is sacred because it comes from God. The dignity of a human life and its right to exist are guaranteed by God. Catholic teaching on abortion and sexuality is part of the same integral vision of the human person that fuels Catholic teaching on economic justice, racism, war, and peace.

These issues don't all have the same content. They don't all have the same weight. All of them are important, but some are more foundational than others. Without a right to life, all other rights are contingent. The heart of the matter is what Solzhenitsyn implied in his Harvard comments. Society is not just a collection of sovereign individuals with appetites moderated by the state. It's a community of interdependent persons and *communities* of persons; persons who have human obligations to one another, along with their human rights. One of those obligations is to not intentionally kill the innocent. The two pillars of Catholic social teaching are respect for the sanctity of the individual and service to the common good. Abortion violates both.

In the American tradition, people have a right to bring their beliefs to bear on every social, economic, and political problem facing their community. For Christians, that's not just a privilege. It's not just a right. It's a demand of the Gospel. Obviously, we have an obligation to respect the dignity of other people. We're always bound to treat other people with charity and justice. But that good will can never be an excuse for our own silence.

Believers can't be silent in public life and be faithful to Jesus Christ at the same time. Actively witnessing to our convictions and advancing what we believe about key moral issues in public life is not "coercion." It's honesty. It's an act of truth-telling. It's vital to the health of every democracy. And again, it's also a duty--not only of our religious faith, but also of our citizenship.

The University of Pennsylvania's motto is *Leges sine moribus vanae*. It means "Laws without morals are useless." All law has moral content. It's an expression of what we "ought" to do. Therefore law teaches as well as regulates. Law always involves the

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five innocent lives. Not a small number, by any reckoning, and these “buds killed by the frost of persecution” (Saint Augustine) have been commemorated by the Church on December 28 since the sixth century. But the number pales under the stark horror of the 1.5 million innocent American children yearly slaughtered in the womb—or even after being partially released from the womb.

Can it be in this enlightened age of stunning scientific achievement, an age in which we have probed and unveiled the mysteries of macrocosm and microcosm, that there still is someone out there in never-never land who maintains a doubt about the sober reality of abortion? Children, innocent, slaughtered are not vacuous words recklessly slipped into the equation. They are precisely chosen and precisely accurate—no others will do if truth is to be honored and not eclipsed with evasive euphemisms.

I have before me as I write, the breathtaking pictures of Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson (presented in *LIFE* Magazine April 30, 1965, and in the August 1990 Issue) whose dedicated commitment over most of a lifetime has been to produce a pictorial chronicling of human development. Using complex high-tech tools such as scanning electron microscopes, which give improved detail and depth, and tiny endoscopes that can peer into a woman's womb, he has captured on film the way each of us came to be, from our first second through our earliest hours and days, into the ensuing weeks and months, “impossible, almost sacred images” in the awed words of *LIFE* Magazine itself, and recalling for the believer the Psalmist's paean to his Maker: I give you thanks that I am so fearfully,

wonderfully made; wonderful are your works. You know me through and through from having watched my bones take shape when I was being formed in secret, knitted together in the limbo of the womb.

Lennart Nilsson has graphically indicted the sophistry of tortured reasoning about the nature of life in the womb, falsehoods already challenged by the remarkable advances in the sciences of embryology, fetalogy and genetics. Challenged also, we should add, by the reader's own unsophisticated, but no less unequivocal, answer to the question, “When did you begin to be?” With deep self-awareness of his own continuity, he replies, “I was there when my mother became pregnant: who was there then, is the same who is here now.”

He would not be at all surprised, therefore, to be informed that from the moment of fertilization there is a full genetic package of 46 chromosomes, the pattern of the individual's constitutional development being thus irrevocably determined; that from fertilization the child is a complex, dynamic, rapidly growing individual, who by the end of the first month has completed the period of relatively greatest size increase and physical change of a lifetime, that from the eighth week the changes in the body will be merely growth and refinement of working parts. This is not an undifferentiated blob waiting for the hand of an outside agent to fashion a masterpiece; the fashioning is already programmed and happening within—all we have to do is let it alone. Someone once wrote to me in arguing the pro-choice stance: “Of course, a healthy decision whether or not to abort involves a sense of what is being destroyed.” It does indeed, and that is the whole point.



Or maybe, in a very frightening sense, it is not the whole point. In the light of the incontestable evidence—incontestable even to pro-choice advocates, apart from some adamant die-hards who are akin to the remnants of the flat earth society—that abortion is the snuffing out of a human life that is not merely a potential human being but a human being with potential already genetically programmed, the pro-abortion argument is shifting to embrace the proposition that not all human life has an intrinsic value that mandates protection. So much for the Declaration of Independence -- and welcome to the world of euthanasia and doctor assisted suicide. Those who have not understood the “seamless garment” argument on behalf of all human life had better pay attention to what is happening -- the dominoes have started falling.

The proposition embodies a threatening prospect that can invade the lives of all of us. Who is out there who will be the one to judge that my life is no longer of value, or is dispensable because my presence deprives another of space or goods or whatever? The December 6, 1996 Issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* highlighted the proposal with reference to abortion in an interview with Doctor Eileen McDonagh of

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BEING HUMAN IN AN AGE OF DISBELIEF

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

imposition of somebody's judgments about morality on everyone else. That's the nature of law. But I think the meaning of Penn's motto goes deeper than just trying to translate beliefs into legislation. Good laws can help make a nation more human; more just; more noble. But ultimately even good laws are useless if they govern a people who, by their choices, make themselves venal and callous, foolish and self-absorbed.

It's important for our own integrity

and the integrity of our country to fight for our pro-life convictions in the public square. Anything less is a kind of cowardice. But it's even more important to live what it means to be genuinely human and "pro-life" by our actions--fidelity to God; love for spouse and children; loyalty to friends; generosity to the poor; honesty and mercy in dealing with others; trust in the goodness of people; discipline and humility in demanding the most from ourselves.

These things sound like pieties, and that's all they are—until we try to live them. Then their cost and their difficulty remind us that we create a culture of life to the extent that we give our lives to others. The deepest kind of

revolution never comes from violence. Even politics, important as it is, is a poor tool for changing human hearts. Nations change when people change. And people change through the witness of other people—people like each of you reading this. You make the future. You build it stone by stone with the choices you make. So choose life. Defend its dignity and witness its meaning and hope to others. And if you do, you'll discover in your own life what it means to be fully human.

Adapted from an address delivered at the University of Pennsylvania. Copyright 2011 the Witherspoon Institute. All rights reserved. ♦

RACHEL'S CRY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

Northeastern University and Radcliffe College, the author of a book published last October, *Breaking the Abortion Deadlock: From Choice to Consent*, which has received much acclaim among pro-choice forces. Doctor McDonagh acknowledges the crux of the anti-abortion argument—that the fetus is a human life—but still contends that a woman has the right to use deadly force to expel the fetus for the same reason that she can defend herself against a rapist. She pins the blame of an unwanted pregnancy and invasion of privacy on the fertilized ovum (outlining all the trouble a fetus can bring: morning sickness, weight gain, increased hormonal levels, even serious illness like diabetes) and argues that

a woman who becomes pregnant and decides she does not want to have a child is as much a victim as one who is raped while running through a park at midnight. No laws besides those restricting abortion, she says, allow a person to invade another's body, to violate a woman's privacy. Her argument thus focuses on a woman's right to self-defense. Self-defense! Sure it is! Just like King Herod's act was an exercise of his right to self-defense. Right?

I do not know what is going to save us from all this madness. But one thing I do know: it will not happen without storming heaven with our prayers, begging God in his mercy to heed our cry, which was the cry heard at Ramah: Rachel bewailing her children, since they are no more. ♦

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