

Central Illinois Life News

Pastors Speak Out

In this column, we provide a forum for the personal reflections of Pro-Life Pastors in Central Illinois. The following is by Rev. Charles Klamut, of St Philomena's Church in Peoria, IL.. All of the pastor's articles from past issues are available on our web site at <http://www.cirtl.org> If you are a member of the clergy seeking an additional forum to speak out for Life, this column is open to you. Contact us at CIRTl.

Israel was God's chosen people. He picked them out and distinguished them from the pagan Gentile nations in order to be a special witness to His own holiness. Israel received the Law, the promises, and the covenant. They received great blessings from God. But what happened? They grew comfortable and complacent.

Rather than reforming the pagans, they conformed to the pagans. The prophets were chosen by God to call Israel back to covenant faithfulness. Isaiah was one of the first prophets. He recites a song for the Israelites.

"My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; He spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines; within it he built a watchtower, and hewed out a winepress. Then he looked for a crop of grapes, but it yielded wild grapes..."

What was Isaiah talking about? He was prophesying the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, which would fall in a few short years to the brutal Assyrians in 722 BC. The Israelites of the ten northern tribes were in effect obliterated. They did not heed God's call for repentance.

A little over 200 years ago, God planted another vineyard. In this vineyard there was fertile, abundant land; there was political liberty;

Coming Events

During Sanctity of Human Life week, January 16 - January 23, 2000, the following events are scheduled:

Forty Hour Prayer Vigil, January 19 - January 23, 2000, in front of the abortion center on North University Street in Peoria. Call Dan Smith at 691-3611 to volunteer to stand for an hour of prayer.

Family Resources Center Open House, Thursday, January 20, 2000 from 5:30 - 6:30 PM, 321 Main Street, Peoria, before the Walk and Sanctity of Human Life Rally.

Walk for Life, 6:30 PM on Thursday, January 20, 2000 at the Peoria County Courthouse. After prayer we will walk together to the Rally carrying signs showing our support for the sanctity of all innocent human life.

Sanctity of Human Life Rally, 7:00 PM on Thursday, January 20, 2000 at Sacred Heart Church across from the Peoria Civic Center. The rally will feature special music and prayer along with reports on local Pro Life efforts. Elizabeth Verchio, Exec. Dir. of Victims Of Choice, a post abortion recovery ministry, will give the keynote address.

Women's Pregnancy Center Concert Of Prayer, Sunday, January 23, 2000. This time of prayer will be at Bethany Baptist Church in Peoria from 2:30 - 4:00 PM. Contact the Women's Pregnancy Center for more information.

Tenth Annual Life Chain

Thank you for helping us close the 90's with our tenth annual Life Chain. For the first time, rain limited our numbers, but it did not dampen the enthusiastic prayers of the over 300 young and old who stood along Glen and University Streets for an hour. Their testimony, for the millions of preborn children who have died and for the countless number whose lives may be threatened in the future, we pray will help turn the hearts and minds of our nation from life to death.

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there was the bright promise of a democratic republic in which life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness were constitutionally promised to each person. This "vineyard" was founded on high ideals, indeed. The vineyard is, of course, the U.S.A. And so, 200 years ago, what has been called the "American Experiment" was launched. God planted this vineyard. He gave us the wonderful nation in which we live, and made ample provision for much fruit to be borne. Today, God looks to the U.S.A. to see the fruit it has yielded--to see the "grapes." What will He find?

He'll find abortion on demand--about 1,600,000 babies aborted a year (that's over 4,000 a day). He'll find euthanasia--one state has legalized it already, more are itching to follow. Then there is the decline of the family -- about one in two marriages end in divorce. There's a degenerate pop-culture which glorifies illicit sex and violence. There is the billion-dollar porn industry, which has exploded since the Internet. There is last year's presidential scandal, at which time the highest-ranking government official lied under oath and was impeached by the House, using lies to cover up other lies in a sordid media escapade...and what was the reaction of so many American people? "So what!! Who cares? Stay out of the man's private life!!" Alarming, few people seemed to care or grasp the implications of what had happened.

Then, God will also find the Littleton, Colorado massacre. I believe that, if God would come today to check out His vineyard, He would find a nation buckling at the knees, becoming more and more desensitized to evil, crumpling under the weight of its own sin. This is not to deny that the U.S.A. offers many benefits. But the fact is, we are in serious trouble as a nation.

How did we get to this point? There are many factors, and of course there is no time to get into them all. Much of the immediate problem can be traced to the early 60's, with the advent of the birth-control pill. This launched the "sexual revolution" which sent traditional morality, sexual restraint, and the traditional family structure reeling (some would say, to the grave). And so it should come as no surprise that, about a decade later, Roe v. Wade should come along and, with it, the legalization of abortion. Americans, after all, needed something to fall back on if their contraceptives failed.

But one can ask: where was the Church in the midst of all this? The people of God listened for moral guidance on a tough and muddled issue, and heard little if any authoritative teaching from their local leaders. Many do not know that, prior to the Anglican "Lambeth Conference" in 1930, every Christian denomination denounced contraception. Historically, it is difficult to deny that contraception paved the way for abortion. Could "Roe v. Wade" have been halted if a unified front had been put up by the enormous body of Christians in America?

Some might object to such a link being established between abortion and contraception. However, Pope John Paul II has clearly affirmed such a link. In *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life) he wrote that contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree;" and that "the pro-abortion culture is especially strong precisely where the Church's teaching on contraception is rejected" (EV, 13). Mother Teresa, as well, affirmed this link at her now-famous talk at the "prayer breakfast" sponsored by the U.S. Senate and House on 3 February, 1994.

Admittedly, it was hard to see all this at the beginning. The "pill" seemed to offer so much. Of course, abortion was much harder to "swallow." Studies now show that the majority of Americans did not want abortion in 1973. "Roe" herself (Norma McCorvey) has recently renounced abortion and the role she played in getting it legalized. The fact is, like all lies, abortion was euphemized into such code-words as "reproductive health," a simple "procedure," "tissue removal," and the ever-popular "choice." This has helped it gain acceptance among the wider population of Americans.

But aside from all this, where are we now? We now have the shocking and grisly "partial-birth

Central Illinois Right To Life, Inc
Presents
The Annual Sanctity of Human Life
Walk and Rally

Thursday, January 20, 2000
with the following events included

Open House at the Family Resources Center
321 Main Street in Peoria, IL
5:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Walk for Life
Peoria County Courthouse
6:30 pm

Prayer, singing, and walk to the Church for the Rally to follow

Sanctity of Human Life Rally
Sacred Heart Church (by Peoria Civic Center)
7:00 pm

Key Note Speaker :Elizabeth Verchio
Executive Director of Victims of Choice

"History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period was not the violent words and deeds of the abortionists, but the appalling silence and indifference of good people. Our generation will have to repent not only for the words and actions of the children of darkness, but also, for the fear and apathy of the children of light. (C. Roy McMillan)

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abortion" procedure. The House and Senate voted it down twice, and the president--true to his word during his campaign--vetoed it both times. Full-fledged infanticide is now being seriously talked about among political policy-makers. In light of all this, it seems somewhat strange that we are so puzzled by stories of moms killing their babies and leaving them in trashcans, or stories like Littleton, Colorado. We wonder how such tragedies happen; yet they happen daily in abortion clinics around the country.

At the root of all this death is an atheistic mentality and a false view of "freedom," one which actually more resembles license. There is a glorification (deification?) of sexual pleasure and a systematic denigration of the family. At the threshold of the year 2000, I'm afraid our Lord looks to America and finds "wild grapes." What's worse, I'm afraid he looks at the Church and finds her all too often sleeping.

We face a "defining trial" as a nation. How are we going to respond? There are a few practical things we can focus on which will have far-reaching and very long-term effects for good.

First, there is the family. "As the family goes, so goes the nation" -so said the Pope in the TWA Dome last January, to a crowd of over 110,000. Do we love the one we've got? The children we've got? Are we open to more children? Back in 1979, at Capitol Mall in Washington, D.C., the Pope said that one of the greatest gifts we can give our children is more siblings--even if this might be to the detriment of more material-based goods. Are we open to using natural family planning (NFP), the Catholic Church's approved method of regulating family size? Are we even aware that NFP is safe, effective, and highly scientific today? How about other areas of family life? Do we pray together? Eat together? Pope John Paul II has referred to the family as "the great wellspring of human happiness," and "the first and vital cell of society." And we all know that if the cells break down, the entire organism will be sick. The family is among the greatest strongholds God has against the devil and his "culture of death." Do not be afraid to uphold and cherish the family!

Second, there is prayer and fasting. "Some demons can only be driven out by prayer and fasting," said our Lord in the Gospel. We can even deny ourselves many of the secular media entertainment -- many of which promote the very culture of death and selfishness we are charged to shun and abolish.

The third means we have at our disposal is our vote. Do not be afraid to vote for life, and to demand life-upholding stances from our public leaders! We face a "defining trial" in America. The political philosopher Edmund Burke once said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Now is the time to promote, defend, and support life! Now is the time for us to boldly proclaim Jesus Christ, even "from the rooftops"! He came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

Historically speaking, 200 years is a short time for a nation. Let's not forget that the United States of America is still in some respects an "experiment," and that a democratic republic cannot last without the virtue of its citizens. What type of future lies in store for the American "vineyard?" Only time will tell. But we must do something, and soon, to change the current tide, or else we face a bad end. Most importantly, what will OUR role be in the destiny of our nation? What will OUR record be on judgment day?

*In Christ,
Rev Charles M. Klamut*

Taken from a Homily given on 10-3-99 at St Philomena's Church, Peoria, IL
Is 5:1-7; Phil 4:6-9; Ps 80; Mt 21:33-43

*Central Illinois Right To Life, Inc
is planning again this year*

A 40 Hour Prayer Vigil

**to be held in front of the abortion center
at 7405 North University Street
In Peoria, Illinois**

**The Prayer Vigil will be held over 5 days
during the annual Sanctity of Human Life week
from January 19, 2000 to January 23, 2000**

**Call CIRTL board member, Dan Smith
at (309) 691-3611
to volunteer to join this effort**

**If every Church could be represented there - for
just one hour, the testimony for life to our
community would be overwhelming!**

... could you not watch with me one hour?

Matt. 26:40b

HELP!!! Single? Children Grown? Semi-retired?
 WE NEED YOU!!! Do you have an hour or two now
 & then to help Central Illinois Right to Life's board
 members with a project? Can we put you on a list of
 prospective volunteers to contact in the future.
 Remember, the "Pro-Choice" i.e. the pro-abortion crowd

has countless workers and millions of dollars. We
 operate on a bare-bones budget and are dependent on
 willing volunteers. If you could help a little in any way,
 it would be greatly appreciated and immensely
 gratifying. Please fill out the coupon on page 3 and

Abortion from a Mennonite Perspective

By Michael Danner

Associate Pastor, Metamora Mennonite Church

As an associate pastor in a Mennonite Church I am somewhat surprised by the lack of dialogue on the issue of abortion from the Anabaptist perspective. As a Christian who affirms Anabaptist understandings, I am committed to the pacifist position. I believe that violence in all cases is not God's will for our relationships. This includes war, the death penalty, domestic violence, economic violence, and abortion. At the same time, I believe that God is a God of justice and that He calls us to be people concerned about and involved in justice issues. Jesus Christ died for the marginalized in our society. I believe that these two positions are supported by and come straight from the teaching of both the Old and New Testament (with area for debate on the death penalty issue).

Although I heard great cries from my Anabaptist brothers when the Kosovo Crises broke, there is an odd silence when it comes to the unborn victims in our society. My Anabaptist brothers have alerted me to the death and destruction caused by U.S. economic sanctions on Iraq. Indeed, children are dying daily under U. S. Sanctions that fail to be effective in the face of a dictator that does not care that his people suffer. Yet, again there is an odd silence when it comes to the death and destruction of too many of our own children. It seems difficult, indeed impossible, for me to ignore the ongoing plight of the unborn in our society.

Yes, abortion is a political hot button. But if we apply the two-fold test of violence and injustice, there is scarcely another issue that compares. Yes, human rights violations for the already born are more tangible. That only underscores the tragedy of abortion. That human life, created in the image of God, is taken for any reason strikes at the very heart of God. In the Old Testament God instituted the death penalty for those who committed a capital crime. Many argue against the death penalty because of the value of human life. Yet, when we read God's reason for the death penalty, He goes one step further. Human life is valuable AND people are created in the *image of God*. Read Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man (NIV)." Each person is God's workmanship that reflects His creativity and bears His image. To strike down a person made in God's image is to strike out at God himself.

I have a friend that is new to the Anabaptist teaching of pacifism, and he tends to refer to it as "passive - ism." Pacifism, properly understood and applied, is anything but passive. As people of peace we need to engage the culture in areas of violence and injustice. It is not enough to sit at home on the lazyboy and say, "I believe in peace." You are not a pacifist by intellectual agreement with the principle of peace and justice, alone. We need to learn to see the world as Jesus sees it, and act as Jesus would act. I believe that Jesus would and does defend the unborn. We need to learn to call abortion what it is. It is an issue of violence against children. It is an issue of grave injustice against the unborn.

At the same time, our culture does untold of violence to women by presenting abortion in a way that denies the emotional and physical realities. A woman or girl cannot kill her own child without emotional side effects. Many women and girls have permanent physical side effects, one of them being death. Yet, these negative consequences are brushed under the carpet. In the cultural silence a crime of violence and injustice is committed against women.

If we believe that violence against unborn children is wrong, then we need to work towards ending that violence. If we believe that the culture of abortion continues to contribute to injustice against children and women, then we need to work towards ending that injustice. There are no easy answers and no quick fixes but there is work to be done. It begins with prayer. It continues with relationships, first with Jesus Christ then with a supportive community of faith. We need to reach into the culture of violence with the life changing love of Christ. It is furthered when those considering abortion are connected to real and responsible options - Options that respect the mother and value the child.

In Christ,

Michael Danner

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Central Illinois Right To Life Web Site Averaging 200 Visitors A Day!

Remember To Visit Us At <http://www.cirtl.org> - and tell others to visit too!

There you will find 150 pages of Pro Life news and perspective and announcements of coming Pro Life events. All of the previous *Pastors Speak Out* essays are available as well as Pro Life sermon outlines, past newsletter articles, and updated position papers addressing Pro Life Issues. There are personal stories on subjects like adoption that will touch your heart. Our site has descriptions of, and contact information for, many of our fellow Pro Life groups in Central Illinois. There are also links to important local, state, national, and international Pro Life organizations. Facts and statistics about abortion and euthanasia and information about current law affecting these issues are on our Abortion Faqs page.

We are especially interested in new material for our site. Your school research paper or speech on abortion, or your Pro Life opinion piece or letter to the editor would be very useful. If you have written any Pro Life music, we want to publish your lyrics on the site to inspire others.. Your personal story about abortion or other sanctity of life issues can be posted anonymously on our site to help others, literally around the world, who are facing similar difficult circumstances.

Unity on the essentials of the Sanctity of Human Life is our objective. We are not seeking uniformity of opinion on all matters.. Therefore, some ideas advocated by the authors of articles in Central Illinois Life News or on the Central Illinois Right To Life website may not necessarily reflect the the personal views of all the members and officers of Central Illinois Right To Life, Inc.

Central Illinois Right to Life, Inc.

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