

The awesomeness of a baby



The Bishop Speaks

Babies have a special ability to enchant us. Just watch how people react to a baby. Smiles all round, strangers reaching out to touch and engage with her, to hold her and of course hand her back to mum at the first sign of a cry.

The loss of a baby through miscarriage, still birth, or at any time after birth is always devastating. That baby is mourned and remembered for ever. In my own family we keep alive the memory of two babies – one who died as a toddler and one in stillbirth - who make up our family of nine siblings. Our family consists of more than those who gather together today. In fact, if ever I say I am one of seven my mother promptly corrects me and reminds me I am one of nine.

Why are babies so special? Why do they connect with us at such a deep level? Babies touch us by their innocence, their beauty and the hope they inspire in us for the future of humanity. Even more profoundly, they remind us of the mystery of life itself and of its connection to God.

I always consider the abortion of a child to be a great tragedy – for both mother and child. I find the current public support of abortion up till birth without any restrictions by so many of our New South Wales politicians, including every local Member of Parliament within our Diocese, deeply troubling. It is concerning that our throwaway culture has progressed from throwing away unwanted appliances to throwing away unwanted children.

It is worth noting the language people use. Supporters of unrestricted abortion never refer to an “unborn child”. They might admit that “this is a very emotional issue” but they do not like to be reminded that it is an actual human life at stake. They seem to prefer the word “foetus” to imply that the child is not human but just an amalgam of cells. Perhaps

we need to remind them that “foetus” literally means “unborn child”. But we continue to kill, and as a society we change our thinking to a view that somehow killing is acceptable because we call it by another name. To me that is unconscionable and a most sorry reflection of the state of our society.

What about the Church’s language on this? It’s worth a look. "From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already ... modern genetic science has demonstrated that from the first instant there is established the programme of what this living being will be: a person, this individual person with his characteristic aspects already well determined. Right from fertilization the adventure of a human life begins."

The church therefore speaks of abortion as the direct killing of an innocent human being which is always gravely immoral; its victims are the most vulnerable and defenceless members of the human family. Saint Pope John Paul said, “The inviolability of the person, which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the inviolability of human life.” The concept of inviolability demands that whatever is inviolable (in this case all and every human life) must never be violated! It is sacred and must be kept safe; it must not be infringed in any way.

Here’s more of the Church’s beautiful language. “Human life is sacred and inviolable at every moment of existence, including the initial phase which precedes birth. All human beings, from their mothers' womb, belong to God who searches them and knows them, who forms them and knits them together with his own hands, who gazes on them

Front Cover: St Joseph’s Stage 3 students clean up the dry Tenterfield Creek bed as part of a unit of work – Caring for God’s Creation

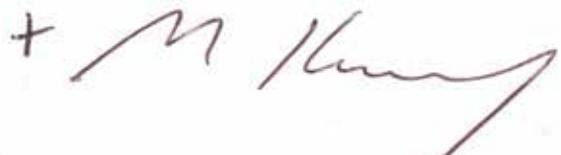


when they are tiny shapeless embryos and already sees in them the adults of tomorrow"

The Church's strong condemnation of abortion does not extend to the mother. "It is true that the decision to have an abortion is often tragic and painful for the mother." Speaking directly to women who have had an abortion, Saint John Paul II said: "The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly, what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child."

As I write this article the Reproductive Health Care Reform Bill 2019 is still before the NSW Parliament. Regardless of the outcome of the Bill, we must focus our attention on providing support, care and appropriate information to all those who are facing difficult choices around a pregnancy.

I pray that we will all value every human person created in love by God and that He will continue to guide and assist our efforts to promote the dignity, value and inviolability of every person.

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