

PRO-LIFE RESOURCE PACKET FOR PARENTS

January 5, 2011

Dear high school parents,

Happy New Year!

I am enclosing a booklet on the Catholic Church's teachings on pro-life issues so that you can also be aware of what we believe as Catholics and so that you can answer questions and enter into dialogue with your youth. The Church is always clear and very frank in her teaching that all human life is to be respected, honored and protected from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. (CCC 2258) Yet her arms are always open to all, offering love, compassion and forgiveness. If your child or someone in your family has experienced firsthand any of these life issues, please let me know if I can help in any way. We want all students to have a positive experience in our sessions.

The booklet accompanying this letter is resource information for you. Under each topic, you will find the teaching of the Church from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. You will also find a listing of websites where you may continue your own research on the Church's teachings and the reality of political legislation. I have also listed a few websites which promote behaviors CONTRARY to Catholic teaching and are directly targeting teens i.e. Planned Parenthood. These are very eye-opening and will help you to understand what your children are potentially being exposed to through media and society.

Please email or call me if you have any questions or concerns.

God bless!

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TOPIC: ABORTION

What the Church Teaches:

(From Catechism of the Catholic Church)

2270 Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person -- among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.”

2271 Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law:

You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish.

God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes.

2272 Formal co-operation in an abortion constitutes a grave offence. The Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication to this crime against human life. 'A person who procures a completed abortion incurs excommunication *latae sententiae*' 'by the very commission of the offence', and subject to the conditions provided by Canon Law. The Church does not thereby intend to restrict the scope of mercy. Rather, she makes clear the gravity of the crime committed, the irreparable harm done to the innocent who is put to death, as well as to the parents and the whole of society.

2274 Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being.

Prenatal diagnosis is morally licit, 'if it respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human fetus and is directed toward its safeguarding or healing as an individual... It is gravely opposed to the moral law when this is done with the thought of possibly inducing an abortion, depending upon the results: a diagnosis must not be the equivalent of a death sentence.'

2275 'One must hold as licit procedures carried out on the human embryo which respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but are directed toward its healing, the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival.'

'It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material.'

'Certain attempts to *influence chromosomic or genetic inheritance* are not therapeutic but are aimed at producing human beings selected according to sex or other predetermined qualities. Such manipulations are contrary to the personal dignity of the human being and his integrity and identity' which are unique and unrepeatable.

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TOPIC: EUTHANASIA

What the Church Teaches:

(From Catechism of the Catholic Church)

2276 Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect. Sick or handicapped persons should be helped to lead lives as normal as possible.

2277 Whatever its motives or means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick, or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable. Thus an act of omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, his Creator. The error of judgment into which one can fall in good faith does not change the nature of this murderous act, which must always be forbidden and excluded.

2278 Discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be legitimate; it is the refusal of "over-zealous" treatment. Here one does not will to cause death; one's inability to impede it is merely accepted. The decisions should be made by the patient if he is competent and able or, if not, by those legally entitled to act for the patient, whose reasonable will and legitimate interests must always be respected.

2279 Even if death is thought imminent, the ordinary care owed to a sick person cannot be legitimately interrupted. The use of painkillers to alleviate the sufferings of the dying, even at the risk of shortening their days, can be morally in conformity with human dignity if death is not willed as either an end or a means, but only foreseen and tolerated as inevitable. Palliative care is a special form of disinterested charity. As such it should be encouraged.

2280 Everyone is responsible for his life before God who has given it to him. It is God who remains the sovereign Master of life. We are obliged to accept life gratefully and preserve it for his honor and the salvation of our souls. We are stewards, not owners, of the life God has entrusted to us. It is not ours to dispose of.

2281 Suicide contradicts the natural inclination of the human being to preserve and perpetuate his life. It is gravely contrary to the just love of self. It likewise offends love of neighbor because it unjustly breaks the ties of solidarity with family, nation, and other human societies to which we continue to have obligations. Suicide is contrary to love for the living God.

2282 If suicide is committed with the intention of setting an example, especially to the young, it also takes on the gravity of scandal. Voluntary co-operation in suicide is contrary to the moral law.

Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide.

2283 We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives.

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TOPIC: EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

What the Church Teaches:

(From Catechism of the Catholic Church)

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Prenatal diagnosis is morally licit, "if it respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human fetus and is directed toward its safe guarding or healing as an individual. . . . It is gravely opposed to the moral law when this is done with the thought of possibly inducing an abortion, depending upon the results: a diagnosis must not be the equivalent of a death sentence."⁸¹

2275 "One must hold as licit procedures carried out on the human embryo which respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but are directed toward its healing the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival."⁸²

"It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material."⁸³

"Certain attempts to *influence chromosomic or genetic inheritance* are not therapeutic but are aimed at producing human beings selected according to sex or other predetermined qualities. Such manipulations are contrary to the personal dignity of the human being and his integrity and identity"⁸⁴ which are unique and unrepeatable.

TOPIC: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

What the Church Teaches:

(From Catechism of the Catholic Church)

Capital Punishment

2266 The State's effort to contain the spread of behaviors injurious to human rights and the fundamental rules of civil coexistence corresponds to the requirement of watching over the common good. Legitimate public authority has the right and duty to inflict penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime. The primary scope of the penalty is to redress the disorder caused by the offense. When his punishment is voluntarily accepted by the offender, it takes on the value of expiation. Moreover, punishment, in addition to preserving public order and the safety of persons, has a medicinal scope: as far as possible it should contribute to the correction of the offender.[67]

2267 The traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude, presupposing full ascertainment of the identity and responsibility of the offender, recourse to the death penalty, when this is the only practicable way to defend the lives of human beings effectively against the aggressor.

"If, instead, bloodless means are sufficient to defend against the aggressor and to protect the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person.

"Today, in fact, given the means at the State's disposal to effectively repress crime by rendering inoffensive the one who has committed it, without depriving him definitively of the possibility of redeeming himself, cases of absolute necessity for suppression of the offender 'today ... are very rare, if not practically non-existent.' [68]

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What the Vatican has said:

The definitive Latin edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, issued in September 1997, states that although the death penalty would be theoretically permissible in instances when it is "the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor," such instances are "practically non-existent" in today's world, given the resources available to governments for restraining criminals. The Catechism language reflects the views of Pope John Paul II, expressed in his 1995 encyclical "The Gospel of Life."

More recently, at his Sept. 13, 2000 general audience in St. Peter's Square, the Holy Father expressed his hope "that there no longer be recourse to capital punishment, given that states today have the means to efficaciously control crime, without definitively taking away an offender's possibility to redeem himself."

In a homily at a Jan. 27, 1999 Papal Mass in St. Louis, Mo., he termed the death penalty "both cruel and unnecessary," and went on to say:

"The new evangelization calls for followers of Christ who are unconditionally pro-life: who will acclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life in every situation. A sign of hope is the increasing recognition that the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil. Modern society has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform."

In a declaration to the first World Congress on the Death Penalty held June 21-23, 2001 in Strasbourg, France, the Vatican termed the death penalty "a sign of desperation," and said it pursued the abolition of capital punishment as "an integral part of the defense of human life at every stage of its development.... The universal abolition of the death penalty would be a courageous reaffirmation of the belief that humankind can be successful in dealing with criminality and of our refusal to succumb to despair before such forces, and as such it would regenerate new hope in our very humanity."

(From U.S. Catholic Bishops' Statement on Capital Punishment, November 1980)

IV. CONCLUSIONS

We do not propose the abolition of capital punishment as a simple solution to the problems of crime and violence. As we observed earlier, we do not believe that any simple and comprehensive solution is possible. We affirm that there is a special need to offer sympathy and support for the victims of violent crime and their families. Our society should not flinch from contemplating the suffering that violent crime brings to so many when it destroys lives, shatters families, and crushes the hopes of the innocent. Recognition of this suffering should not lead to demands for vengeance but to a firm resolution that help be given to the victims of crime and that justice be done fairly and swiftly. The care and the support that we give to the victims of crime should be both compassionate and practical. The public response to crime should include the relief of financial distress caused by crime and the provision of medical and psychological treatment to the extent that these are required and helpful. It is the special responsibility of the Church to provide a community of faith and trust in which God's grace can heal the personal and spiritual wounds caused by crime and in which we can all grow by sharing one another's burdens and sorrows.

We recognize that many citizens may believe that capital punishment should be maintained as an integral part of our society's response to the evils of crime, nor is this position incompatible with Catholic tradition. We acknowledge the depth and the sincerity of their concern. We urge them to review the considerations we have offered which show both the evils associated with capital punishment and the harmony of the abolition of capital punishment with the values of the Gospel. We urge them to bear in mind that public decisions in this area affect the lives, the hopes and the fears of men and

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women who share both the misery and the grandeur of human life with us and who, like us, are among those sinners whom the Son of Man came to save.

We urge our brother and sisters in Christ to remember the teaching of Jesus who called us to be reconciled with those who have injured us (Matthew 5:43-45) and to pray for forgiveness for our sins "as we forgive those who have sinned against us." (Matthew 6:12) We call on you to contemplate the crucified Christ who set us the supreme example of forgiveness and of the triumph of compassionate love.

Websites In Support of Church Teaching:

- Catechism of the Catholic Church – available in an on-line, searchable format at sborromeo.org/ccc.htm
- USCCB website – has Church documents, Fact Sheets, Public Policy articles and commentaries, testimonies on all life issues (abortion, assisted suicide, stem cell research, capital punishment, “morning after” pill, etc.)
- Human Life International (hli.org) – Catholic pro-life website with lots of information, current world-wide news/events on life issues
- Abort73.com website - not Catholic, but pro-life; geared toward young people; FYI – includes some video with graphic imagery
- Texas Catholic Conference website (txcatholic.org) - public policy arm of the bishops of Texas before the Texas legislature, the Texas delegation in Congress, and state agencies. The public policy issues addressed by the Conference include institutional concerns of the Catholic Church as well as issues related to Catholic social teachings
- Feminists for Life website (feministsforlife.org) – non-sectarian, non-partisan organization that promotes better choices (than abortion) and resources for women
- Generations for Life website (generationsforlife.org) – organization that promotes education of young people in pro-life issues and support for forming pro-life clubs of young people in schools, churches and communities
- Terri Schindler Shiavo Foundation (terrisfight.org) – the foundation’s mission is to develop a national network of resources and support for the medically-dependent, persons with disabilities, and the incapacitated who are in or potentially facing life-threatening situations

Websites In Opposition to Church Teaching:

- Planned Parenthood’s “teenwire.org” website – geared toward teens; promotes sexual promiscuity and minimizes the value of parent/teen communication
- Compassion & Choices (compassionandchoices.org) website – formerly Hemlock Society – support and promotes legislation in favor of assisted suicide / euthanasia
- Michael J Fox website – promotes embryonic stem cell research for Parkinson’s treatment (michaeljfox.org)
- NARAL (National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League) web site – supports and promotes pro-choice (pro-abortion) legislation and the election of pro-abortion candidates.

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HOW CAN MY FAMILY AND I SUPPORT PRO-LIFE CAUSES?

**ATTEND THE TEXAS CATHOLIC PRO-LIFE DAY
AND
TEXAS RALLY FOR LIFE: SATURDAY, JANUARY 22rd!**

7:00 a.m. Prayer Vigil at South Austin Planned Parenthood Facility, 201 East Ben White Blvd. (Meet for a blessing first at 7 a.m. at San Jose Parish, 2435 Oak Crest in Austin).

9:45 a.m. Rosary For Life led by teens and young adults while elementary school students reenact the Joyful Mysteries at San Jose Parish.

10:30 a.m. Diocesan Pro-Life Mass celebrated by Bishop Joe Vásquez at San Jose Parish. Lunch after Mass is \$5 per person in Parish Hall.

1:00 p.m. Texas Rally For Life: Meet in the parking lot at the southeast corner of 17th Street and Congress for the March to the South Steps of the Capitol.

2:00-3:00 p.m. Pro-Life Rally Program at the South Steps of the Capitol with pro-life speakers and leaders from across the state, including Bishop Joe Vásquez, Catholic Diocese of Austin and Texas State Sen. Dan Patrick.

3:30-5:30 p.m. Party for Life at the University Catholic Center, 2010 University Avenue, hosted by Catholic Longhorns for Life and Office of Pro-Life Activities & chaste Living. All are invited to attend and meet our diocesan seminarians, joining us for food, fun, friendship and door prizes.

For More information contact the office of pro-life activities and chaste living at (512) 949-2486.

More ways to be involved with pro-life work:

- Contact organizations asking for volunteer opportunities or coordinate efforts to supply needed items
- Local Maternity homes- Annunciation maternity home in Georgetown
- Gabriel Project or Diocese Life Center
- Local Nursing homes- for the listing of Round Rock nursing homes check out:
<http://www.yellowbook.com/category/nursing-homes/texas/round-rock/>
- Pray a rosary each day for an end to abortion and capital punishment.

Participate in Prayer Vigils and 40 Days for Life every Fall and Spring!

<http://www.austincoalitionforlife.org/>