

Homily for the Sixth Sunday of Easter
Pro-Life Sunday
May 9, 2021

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has designated this Week as National Week for Life and Family. It always coincides with the United Nation's International Day of Families. And so in our Archdiocese this Sunday is designated "Pro-Life Sunday." It always coincides with the March for Life and often coincides with Mother's Day.

While some may feel this takes away from the celebration of motherhood, it actually emphasizes it. For what makes one a mother? Having a child. And the child that makes one a mother, whether naturally conceived or adopted, grows in a womb. So, it is very appropriate to talk about one of the greatest assaults on motherhood. And that is abortion. The destruction of the child in the womb.

For more than half a century the Catholic Church has been a prophetic voice crying out in a wilderness of indifference, resignation and hostility the dignity and value of all human life, from the first moment of conception till natural death. And like the prophets of old, it has been reviled and attacked for doing so.

The prolife cause has had a difficult struggle in a society where other forces are more influential than itself: the mainstream media, academia, well-funded and well-connected "pro-choice" organizations,

and the power of the State. The struggle has realized very few victories and many defeats.

But we steadfastly continue the fight, knowing that we may lose the battles but eventually win the war. Most of all because it is the right thing to do.

For if we do not continue to be the voice of the voiceless, who will? If we do not continue to proclaim the dignity of the human person in the face of abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, fetal experimentation, and more, then who will?

It is not an enviable task; not at the institutional or the individual level. As anyone knows who has dared to broach the topic from a prolife perspective – even with those to whom we are close – it can easily lead to angry and dismissive responses, verbal attacks on oneself or one's faith, and risk the estrangement of family members and the loss of friendships.

The same holds true at the institutional level. Do you not think that the secular world would be less hostile to the Catholic Church if she was able to change her teachings on things like abortion, euthanasia, contraception, premarital sex, and homosexual acts?

I remember back in the 1990s there was a medical operation program on television. It was not a drama but a series that showed up close actual medical procedures: from knee surgery, to hernia repair, to facial

reconstruction. My mother loved it. I hated it. I can't stand to watch real operations; they make me queasy.

But I remember back then thinking: for all the different medical procedures it takes delight in presenting, it will never show in detail an actual surgical abortion. Yet it is one of the most common procedures in the United States and Canada. And the reason is obvious.

Most people don't want to watch a baby being torn apart. As an abstract idea they may support a "right to abortion," but they do not want to actually see it happening. Pity the poor doctors and nurses who do not want to perform such things but are being forced by the government. Just as other medical professionals are being forced to participate in assisted suicides and euthanasia.

The Bishops of Ontario have launched a campaign to support the establishment of conscience rights legislation to protect physicians, nurses and other health care workers in Ontario who do not want to participate in assisted suicide and euthanasia. You can send an automated letter of support for this legislation to your local MPP by going to our parish website and following the link found on our News and Events page.

There is a great deal of attention being given of late to the issue of racism. Maybe I will end with a quote from Dr. Alveda King, niece of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

“Abortion and racism are linked. Both are symptoms of a fundamental human error. The error is thinking that when someone stands in the way of our wants, we can justify getting that person out of our lives. Abortion and racism stem from the same poisonous root, selfishness. To justify getting people out of our lives, we must create the deception that the other person is less important, less worthy, less human.

These pretenses help us feel a bit better about discriminating against someone because of his skin colour or gestational age, but they’re still lies and our actions are still wrong.

All human beings, regardless of colour or age, are part of one race – the human race. If we simply treat other people the way we like to be treated, racism, abortion, and other forms of inhumanity will be the things of the past. The fight against abortion is a new frontier in the civil rights movement.”

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Mt 7:12). And so, as a Church we continue to defend the God-given human rights of all persons, for as Jesus says in today’s Gospel: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Amen.