

St. John Vianney, the holy Cure of Ars, offered this wonderful image of God, “God is like a Mother who carries her child on the edge of a precipice. She does all she can to protect it.”

In this Year of the Priest I thought it most appropriate as we mark *Respect Life Sunday* this October 4th to see God in feminine imagery. But, in the endless debate over the value of the unborn child, we children certainly do think and speak differently about this matter. Language forms perceptions and perceptions form behaviors and values. In the end, words *are* culture. Our folks in the news and entertainment industry have used this principle very well.

As Associate Director for Pro-Life activities and as a Pastor myself I understand how challenging these issues have become for our parishioners. Every weekend, we priests look out over our congregation and we well know that before us stands as diverse a crowd as you can imagine. We listen to the 24 hour news programs; we hear the words, perceive the slant and know that culture is being formed before us. All of that we bring to our worship and on the issues of life, both before birth and as life continues beyond birth, we are immersed in that culture of thoughts, ideas, and perceptions. However, the Church too has a culture. That culture is a culture of life but to live in the world yet somehow be above the politics and the labels that cause us to break apart.

As we continue the revolving battle of words on the dignity of the unborn child, we are reminded that anything which touches the lives of human beings is the work of the Church. The abortion issue must be placed in the broad context of other social and moral issues of poverty, social justice, care for the elderly and the dying, and the humane treatment of prisoners, particularly those on death row. This presents a daunting but appropriate context and we pastors know how high the emotions run around any one of these issues. When *all* the life issues are seen as united, we find it easier to understand why the Church fights so consistently for the sanctity of the human being. As we stand up for the equality of persons and for the basic principles of justice we are witnesses to life.

As we participate in *40 Days for Life* or make a special *Holy Hour for Life*, or work in our parishes for life, we note abortion and other related life issues as a great sin of injustice against all of humanity - that same sin which so impassioned the prophets and Jesus himself. Matt Cato, the Director of Our Archdiocesan *Office for Justice and Peace* and I encourage all those who stand with the Church to make this a united effort for prayer and passion.

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