

“Seizing this Pro-Life Moment to Make Abortion Unthinkable”
Talk for 40 Days for Life Gala
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It’s not every day that the editorial page of the New York Times makes me feel hopeful. But – believe it or not – in an opinion piece from earlier this year, I noticed something very promising. The article weighed in on the ongoing battle for our nation’s soul that is the question of legalized abortion. Now don’t get me wrong: this opinion piece, written by a famous novelist, was predictably in favor of legalized abortion.

But there was something about the piece that struck me as new, and it was this newness that gives me hope for our nation’s soul. This famous novelist’s defense of legal abortion seemed to lack the usual pro-abortion confidence in the inevitability of so-called “progress,” the usual smug complacency which holds to the narrative that the legalization of abortion is the “settled law” of our land. Instead, he seemed a bit unhinged and in a panic. He seemed desperate.

Consider the way he argues that abortion is good for women. He has an obsession throughout his piece of pitting the good of the mother against the good of the child in her womb. He constantly refers to a woman being “punished” by her pregnancy. For him, access to abortion is about giving women their path to happiness. “Pro-life proponents have no qualms about forcing women to go through childbirth,” he says; “they give women no choice.” He castigates Pope Pius XII for teaching in his famous address to midwives that the child in the womb has the right to life given to him by God Himself and not by his parents or society or human authority. “Poor midwives” – our author laments – “first doctors stop them from helping women; then the pope.” (I actually laughed out loud at that point in the article; we either laugh or cry, right?) He goes on: “The prevailing impetus to oppose abortion is to punish the woman who doesn’t want the child.” He even refers later in the article to the old sayings around a woman pregnant out of wedlock. He writes: “Of an unmarried woman or girl who got pregnant, people of my grandparents’ generation used to say: ‘She is paying the piper.’ Meaning, she deserves what she gets... That cruelty is the abiding impetus behind the dishonestly named right-to-life movement.” Let that sink in – he is *actually* arguing that pro-life people oppose abortion because we hate women and want to punish them with a baby.

His overstatement here is telling: he seems to be trying to convince *himself* above all! He even goes so far to implicitly deny the greatest sacred cow of the church of secularism. He speaks favorably with how society for the longest time was accepting of abortion, especially before “quickening” (when the baby began to manifest movement in the womb). He then narrates a sinister anti-woman movement that began in the late 19th century, when physicians began to oppose the idea of abortion. He would have us believe that this was due to the darkening of an increasingly religiously-influenced society. Sorry, no. There was one very clear and simple reason that gave physicians cause for this. It’s called science. And that is the sacred cow of the church of secularism, is it not? They profess belief in science, and nothing else. Science is the end all and be of all knowledge, right? It’s the only way to know anything, there are no other avenues of knowledge. So they profess believe in science – that is, unless it contradicts what they want to believe, and then their personal will trumps even scientific fact. Ever since the late 19th century we have known from science – it is a scientific fact – that life begins at conception. Apparently back then science really counted for something, even to the point of influencing public policy.

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It thinks the author doth protest too much, and I find that hopeful. (Hope for the pro-life cause, discovered in the *New York Times*!) Notice his need to insist that pro-life people don't care about women. It wasn't enough just to argue how abortion helps women or that pro-life people should be more caring for children after birth. It's as if he sensed he was losing: losing socially, losing politically, losing spiritually. I imagined him on some shoreline, frantically calling out to the women he is supposed to help: "You need abortion! Really; you do!" His furious language revealed his desperation to me, and I began to understand that the other side is panicking. My brothers and sisters, they're *panicking*. This is *very* good news. They're losing, they know it, and they're desperate.

As I reflected this year on this unwittingly revealing article, I realized that we had seen this same loss of nerve already in the behavior of politicians and pundits alike during the Brett Kavanaugh hearings. The prospect of a majority pro-life Supreme Court caused panic. Kavanaugh's confirmation was deemed such a clear and present danger to legalized abortion that the basic principles of due process and human decency had to be set aside in the Senate's and press' character assassination of Kavanaugh in the court of public opinion. Indeed, behavior was displayed during those hearings that was nothing short of sheer hysteria. Politicians and pundits alike could not stand the thought that five justices on the Court might possibly opine that the right to privacy doesn't mean that it's okay – let alone a good – to kill a child in the child's mother's womb. They were panicking. They were desperate in the lengths to which they went to destroy Kavanaugh's reputation. This is *very* good news.

I realized further that we saw this desperation again on this year's anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade* in the strange and morbid glee of the governor of New York and his accomplices following upon the erasure of all legal protection (even simply legal status, in the case of a homicide of a pregnant woman!) for unborn children in New York. There it was, before all of our eyes: a standing ovation for the governor's signature on the wicked bill, which was punctuated by a special pink lighting of Freedom Tower at One World Trade Center. Disgusting as it was, that extravagant effort to celebrate death was just a little too revealing. Why did they feel the need to celebrate so excessively? Folks, I realize now, they were *panicking*. They know they are losing. They know their time is short.

Why such panic from the pro-abortion side? Certainly, it's nice to have an administration favorable to anti-abortion policies. But more than this, opinion polls these days regularly report that more than half of Americans support significant legal protection for unborn children in most cases. (We still have work to do, of course, in convincing them that killing is wrong no matter how the child came to be conceived or what state of health the child is in.) Even more hopeful, Gallup reports that young adults are the fastest-growing pro-life demographic. I find this to be true anecdotally, too, as I speak with the members of the younger generations in my ministry: they are very confused about things like religion and marriage, but they do not deny that there is a child in the womb of a pregnant woman. One recent example is an encounter I had with high school students the night before I was to deliver a prayer breakfast talk in Bakersfield. During a break they wrote out their questions. One of them was: "Can the sin of abortion be forgiven?" It can, of course, under the right conditions: sacramental confession and absolution, contrition, and firm purpose of amendment. That should be readily apparent; the fact that a young person even asked this question tells me that they understand just how serious of an evil this is.

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Certainly advances in technology have a lot to do with these changing attitudes. Indeed, 3D sonograms and other advances in pre-natal technology have made it almost impossible to deny the humanity of the unborn child. In fact, a friend recently shared with me that a former United States Secretary of State recently has converted to the pro-life position due to 3D-sonogram technology. Furthermore, the movie *Unplanned*, which, as you know, tells the conversion story of former Planned Parenthood employee Abby Johnson, did \$19 million in box office revenue and, upon release to DVD, was instantly number one on Amazon. Abby reports that many people have written to her, informing her of their rejection of abortion after seeing the film.

As minds and hearts have changed, all of this – the momentum of 3D sonograms, Kavanaugh’s confirmation and Abby’s amazing story – has, as I’m sure you know – crescendoed into legislative victories all over our beloved land: real complete legal protection for the unborn in Alabama, with protection from six weeks after conception in Georgia, Ohio, Kentucky, and Mississippi. Missouri has banned abortions after eight weeks, and Louisiana is expected to ban the killing of unborn babies six weeks and older. Arkansas and Utah have banned abortion after 18 weeks. Yes, it is true that, on the one hand, some of these legislative victories have been stalled by court injunction; on the other hand, though, there is no doubt that such legislative victories have been spurred by the promising new developments in the American judiciary, including the hope of the appointment of a sixth reasonable Supreme Court justice.

This is good news. This is why the other side is panicking and desperate. Our pro-life moment has arrived in this country, and it is ours now to *seize that moment*. How do we seize this moment? What is the goal of our pro-life movement? My friends, I want to propose to you this evening that we fight in this pro-life cause not to make abortion rarer or undesirable or illegal; we do those things, to be sure, but you know well what the real goal is, it’s your motto: to end abortion. If we want to end abortion, it means that our ultimate purpose is to make abortion *unthinkable*. To make abortion unthinkable: this is the goal that focuses all of our efforts. We are striving to create a society in which abortion would not even occur to parents, even to those in difficult situations. This is a society that understands that the proper response to a woman in a crisis pregnancy is not violence, the horrendous, ruthless violence that ends in the death of a baby and the psychological scarring of the mother; no, it understands that the only happy response is love, to surround the mother with all the love and support she needs to bring her new life into the world. I want to envision with you this evening such a society, one in which abortion would not even be considered a possibility.

Making abortion unthinkable is a huge task that touches on almost every aspect of civil society. It is the difference between a culture of life and a culture of death. It is a task that involves the education of the whole person in virtue and holiness. Only a society set free by the grace of Jesus Christ can follow the natural law in our fallen world. Only by the grace of Christ can we receive the gift of a society in which abortion is unthinkable. This is why prayer and fasting are at the center of the pro-life movement. We are beggars before the Lord of Life. We can never forget this. Our pro-life work is possible only if we have in place the basic norms of Christian piety: Sunday Mass, regular (at least monthly) confession, daily Rosary, faithfulness to the duties of our state in life. Abortion will become unthinkable only through the establishment of the social Kingship of Christ, only through the reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary in every human heart and all of human society. This Kingship of Christ can only begin if we let Him be

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King firstly of our hearts and of our families and businesses. This is part of the reason that I solemnly consecrated our Archdiocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on October 7, 2017: the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary, and on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima. Personal holiness is the beginning of a culture in which abortion is unthinkable. In a society in which abortion is unthinkable, all individuals and communities would constantly seek to fulfill the will of Christ in all things. Christ would be the center of all activity, and He would be excluded nowhere. All decisions would be made in accord with His teachings, and His peace would reign in all hearts.

Now, we know that the vast majority of human persons are called to become saints by being virtuous husbands and wives, fathers and mothers; to the vast majority of people, God gives the vocation of marriage. This means that our work for creating an abortion-free society concerns holy matrimony in a particular way. We know where pregnancies come from, of course. Abortion is most unthinkable when each pregnancy comes to be in the context of a holy marriage. To this end, the pro-life movement encompasses work for authentic Catholic education in building a holy marriage culture, both inside and outside the home. This begins in our own families as we raise our own children to live a life ordered toward virtue. The institution of marriage conditions the whole culture, not just the spouses and their children: and so, to a virtuous man or woman in a healthy marriage culture, abortion is unthinkable. The farther away from virtuous marriage we get, the more attractive abortion becomes. Thus, the first way that we make abortion unthinkable is by living and building a healthy and well-ordered culture of marital love. This is part of the reason why I focus so much on defending the dignity and holiness of marriage and family life in my ministry – the sanctity of marriage and the sanctity of life are intimately connected.

Marital love is ordered, as we know, to the procreation and education of the children of that marriage. Marital love bears fruit in making saints. Therefore, to make abortion unthinkable, we educate our children in virtue. We form them in prudence so that they will make a wise choice of spouse in their own lives. We teach them justice so that they will render to each his due, respecting firstly the right to life of each innocent human person, including the unborn. We teach them fortitude so that they will have the courage to choose life even in the difficult circumstances that inevitably arise inside and outside of marriage. We teach them temperance so that they will have the chastity to use their sexual faculties only inside of marriage, ordered always to the eternal good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children.

We can put that much more simply and concretely: we must inculcate in our young people the capacity for fidelity in marriage. That is the secret to their happiness, no matter what their God-given vocation in life is. Without that capacity – in essence, the virtue of chastity in its true and full sense, which is nothing other than love rightly ordered – our young people will not find true happiness in life. So that is a very concrete, clearly defined benchmark for whether we are setting our young people up for happiness or depression: the capacity for fidelity in marriage. And we know what an epidemic of depression we have with our young people nowadays. And so we teach our children faith, hope, and charity, so that they will learn to trust God, to believe His teachings, and to keep His commandments, even when they are tempted to go astray. Nothing is more important for making abortion unthinkable than building and living a healthy and holy marriage culture. It starts in each one of our lives, according to our own state of life. This wisdom and love flows out of our families into society through our own preaching of the Gospel in our own spheres

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of influence. Never forget that in your pro-life work: the causes of marriage and life are inseparable.

We create a society in which abortion is unthinkable also by casting out and renouncing the lies that blind us to the truth about abortion. We renounce the lie that abortion is pro-woman. This is the biggest lie of the pro-abortion movement. They argue that they are on the side of women. We know what true love for women means, and we need to make sure that mothers with unwanted pregnancies are feeling that love from us. We make abortion unthinkable by loving women, especially those who are experiencing unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. In a society in which abortion is unthinkable, women would never equate their own dignity or freedom with access to legal abortion. In a society that surrounds women in such crisis situations with love, there is no such thing as an unwanted pregnancy. And there are so many amazing crisis pregnancy centers that have sprung up in our communities and all over our country that are making this happen. Indeed, in the United States, there are twice as many pro-life pregnancy centers as abortion clinics! In our Archdiocese, we even have several homes for unwed mothers, including a beautiful community in San Francisco operated by the Missionaries of Charity of St. Teresa of Calcutta, and another by our own Catholic Charities. This love for mothers helps to make abortion unthinkable. Despite what the author of that New York Times op-ed, and so many others aligned with the abortion industry, want people to believe, it is really only the pro-life movement that is pro-woman and loves mothers in crisis pregnancy situations and is committed to accompanying and supporting them. We give them resources: spiritual, emotional, psychological, medical, economic – all that they need to give their child the gift of a healthy birth.

In Santa Clara County, there is a beautiful outreach called Real Options. Everywhere that there is a Planned Parenthood in the county, across the street is a Real Options pro-life crisis pregnancy center. At Real Options, women can receive all the care they need for healthy and affordable prenatal care, without the shadow of the possibility of abortion. This is a shining example of how we make Planned Parenthood obsolete. I want to take this opportunity this evening, as the Archbishop of San Francisco, to thank you, the lay leaders of the pro-life movement, for taking similar action here in our Archdiocese. There are six Planned Parenthood centers in our Archdiocese. How much more unthinkable could we make abortion in our communities if a crisis pregnancy center would open across the street from each one of them? And, thanks to lay leadership, we are taking the first step now. You may have heard of plans for the Bella Clinic, a women's health clinic that will be operated out of our chancery office. (It will have its own separate entrance so people won't have to walk through the lobby of the chancery to get there – they likely won't even know that it's part of the building that houses the offices of the Archdiocese of San Francisco!) This is two blocks away from where Planned Parenthood is going to build a "flag ship" clinic. We will beat them to the punch by having our clinic up and running before they get started. But we also need to start praying *now*, to put an end to this atrocity before they even put it into action.

We also renounce the lie that abortion is pro-choice. "Pro-choice" is an improper name for those who support legalized abortion. In truth, they believe in one choice – all their efforts converge on that one evil outcome. But evil is not a "choice" in the proper sense of the term. Good and evil are not like two paths on a forked road. That is bad philosophy. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas have taught us better than that. Rather, if we envision walking along a road, all available paths are good choices. Those good choices are the stuff of freedom and choice. The choice for evil is more like stopping and falling down on our backs in the road! We must remember that God is perfectly

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free, the very Author of freedom, and He cannot choose evil. Therefore, abortion, and all other evils, have nothing to do with freedom or with choice. Evils like these are more like a death of freedom and choice. In a society in which abortion is unthinkable, we would conceive freedom rightly as the power to choose the good, the power to become excellent of our own willing. Moreover, for choice to exist, there have to be at least two options; one option is no choice. And you can ask my brothers here in ordained ministry, we hear this from women: “I didn’t want to go through with it, but I felt like I had no choice.” There are many other choices possible: adoption, raising the child herself, and the old-fashioned solution of marriage which we should not rule out in every case. As shocking as it sounds, that’s why I like to say that pro-life crisis pregnancy clinics are the ones who are really pro-choice: they are there to help those women exercise every choice except one, and provide with the information and support she needs to do so. The other will only help her exercise one choice, and one choice, as I said, means no choice at all.

With this proper understanding of freedom and choice, we see that only the pro-life movement is on the side of this debate that gives women authentic choices. We believe in real choices for women and we give her many good options from which to choose. We will support a woman in her efforts to find a beautiful home for her child if she chooses adoption. We will support her spiritually, emotionally, and economically in our faith communities and families if she chooses to raise her child as a single mother. We will provide excellent marriage counseling or marriage preparation for her if she chooses to raise her child with the father of the child or with a loving stepfather. We will even walk with her if she falls down on the road and resorts to the evil of legal abortion. We stay with her and help her up to keep on walking towards eternal life. We give her the spiritual, emotional, and psychological healing she needs in the Sacrament of Penance and in our post-abortive healing ministry, like Project Rachel and the retreats of Rachel’s Vineyard. Those who claim to be pro-woman by endorsing what they deceptively call “choice” don’t do that: they don’t help women heal, because in their narrative women shouldn’t have those feelings, and they shut her out in finding any venue in which to express those feelings. The pro-life movement never abandons women, even when they aren’t ready for our truth-grounded love. If she is sick, in prison, dying, abandoned, alone, we will always be with her and walk with her. We never give up on any woman. We desire to see her live in Heaven with God forever. Only in a society in which abortion is unthinkable will women reach their true potential for freedom for excellence.

We also renounce the lie that abortion is pro-child. We make abortion unthinkable by loving and valuing every human life, both before and after the birth of the child. To accuse pro-life minded people as only valuing unborn life and of being neglectful of the sacredness of human life after birth is preposterous. Only the person most ignorant of history will fail to recognize that Catholic culture has given to society the gift of schools, hospitals, orphanages, scholarship, the arts, and all the other riches of human flourishing! Only Catholic culture can create a society in which abortion is unthinkable, in which every human life is welcomed and nourished and protected. The pro-abortion movement lives on the lie that mother and child are enemies. The pro-life movement accepts the reality that not all pregnancies are expected or desired, that suffering is real and that life is not always easy. We also accept the truth that the bond of mother with child is created by God and is indeed sacred. We proclaim fervently that the life of the mother is sacred and that it was sacred from the first moment of her conception. We declare, as well, that the life of her unborn child is sacred and that it will be sacred even when she becomes a mother in the future. We make abortion unthinkable by destroying this false dichotomy between the interests and rights of the mother and those of the child. Mother and child are profoundly united and their flourishing is bound up

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together, the one with the other. Pro-lifers know that you cannot love only the mother or only the child. In a society in which abortion is unthinkable, we “love them both,” as the beautiful saying goes.

Catholic social teaching indeed demands love for the child after birth. We are indeed called to love and value every human life around us. We begin this task in our families, which are schools of love. This is where the pro-life movement is born and abortion first becomes unthinkable. The friendship of the family, then, overflows into the various societies of which we are members, finding its perfection in the polis (the city or state) and in the Church. This is the true vision of civil society in Catholic social teaching. In accord with this God-given order of human society, the pro-life movement truly loves the child after as well as before birth. In accord with civic friendship lived in subsidiarity, we care especially for the poor and the weak in our midst. We may disagree on the role of government or law; we cannot disagree on our basic duties of charity and justice in our families, communities, cities, and Church. The truth, as you know, is that pro-life people know how to love the poor. You will never see more heroic care for the poor than among those committed to the cause for life. Our crisis pregnancy centers are profound examples of love for poor mothers and children after birth. In a society in which abortion is unthinkable, today’s rich would care for today’s poor so that tomorrow’s rich might supply the needs of tomorrow’s poor. This is what St. Paul commands: “For I mean not that others should be eased and you burdened, but by an equality. In this present time let your abundance supply their want, that their abundance also may supply your want: that there may be an equality, as it is written: ‘He that had much had nothing over; and he that had little had no want’” (2 Cor 8:13-15).

My dear brothers and sisters, this evening we have rejoiced in a newfound hope for the establishment of the culture of life in our country. We have identified the panic and desperation of the enemy. We have seen that he is worried and running scared. We have considered, then, how we can seize this pro-life moment that is before us. We have envisioned a society in which abortion is unthinkable: a society in which Christ is King, marriage is holy, children are educated in virtue, women are loved and supported, freedom is properly understood, and life is considered sacred in all its stages.

Allow me then to conclude with, once again, the words of St. Paul, this time from his Letter to the Ephesians:

For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man: That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts: that, being rooted and founded in charity, You may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, To know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge: that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God [Eph 3:14-19].

Amen.