

October 14, 2018

## **Must a Catholic Promote the Dignity of the Preborn Child?**

The Catholic Church teaches clearly and consistently that life begins at conception (in the terms of embryology: “fertilization”). Abortion, defined as the direct, intentional killing of a living human person in the womb of its mother, is gravely contrary to the moral law of the Church and in particular the Fifth Commandment that states “Do not kill.” This teaching has been the consistent teaching of the Church from the beginning to the present time. The Church’s teaching on abortion is not just the point of view of a religion; it is also consistent with natural law ethics and is compatible with knowledge gained through embryology.

Pope St. John Paul II, speaking infallibly by invoking the highest level of teaching authority in the Church, stated the following words in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (“The Gospel of Life”): “[B]y the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors, and in communion with the Bishops of the Catholic Church, I confirm that the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral. This doctrine, based upon that unwritten law which man, in the light of reason, finds in his own heart... is reaffirmed by Sacred Scripture, transmitted by the Tradition of the Church and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium” (*Evangelium Vitae*(1995), par. 57)... “Nothing and no one can in any way permit the killing of an innocent human being, whether a fetus or an embryo, an infant or an adult, an old person, or one suffering from an incurable disease, or a person who is dying. Furthermore, no one is permitted to ask for this act of killing, either for himself or herself or for another person entrusted to his or her care, nor can he or she consent to it, either explicitly or implicitly. Nor can any authority legitimately recommend or permit such an action” (*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Euthanasia Iura et Bona*(1980), 546 ).

Not only may one not actively kill a fetus or an embryo himself, but since it is a universal moral norm applicable to all peoples, one must also witness to this belief in his conversations and actions and counsel others about what is right and wrong, good and evil, when it comes to decisions surrounding the child in the womb.

Furthermore, as St. John Paul II and the CDF state, no authority (such as the State, for example) should ever permit the act of killing the person in the womb of its mother. We should keep this in mind when we vote.

Locally, our own bishop David O’Connell has also stated that life begins at conception and that human life must be protected. He states, “The Diocese of Trenton... will be ‘pro-life, pro-family and pro-poor’ in their activities and advocacy” (Most Rev. David M. O’Connell, CM, JCD, Bishop of Trenton, *The Statutes of the Fourth Synod of the Diocese of Trenton*(2014), statute 169). So the answer is “yes”; a Catholic must promote the dignity of the preborn child: in our beliefs and thoughts and in our words and actions.