

Easter Season: Celebrate Your Freedom

Aren't We All For Choice? As Americans, we take it for granted that we have enormous leeway in making personal choices. Want a certain cup of coffee? Do you like a particular breakfast cereal? How about picking a shampoo, or selecting a movie to see? We also have the freedom to worship where we want, choose our elected officials & school board members, and can accept or reject policy proposals listed on our election ballots. In short, **we view having more choice as better than less.**

Yet many of our freedoms come with limits and penalties, and many require us to act responsibly. We are free to drive through a red light, but that causes potential harm and legal violations, and possibly even fatal results. We can enroll our kids in private or Catholic school, but that means paying tuition on top of our local taxes for public schools.

When our actions take the life of another person, society imposes the most serious penalties, even up to the death penalty in many states. The argument put forward by pro-abortionists (they like to use 'pro-choice') is that they want women to have the freedom to choose, as in other areas of life. But one of their choices means aborting a pregnancy. Many people are against abortion not because we want to limit the freedom to choose but because another life is involved, that of the developing human being.

Easter, the season of celebrating Jesus' resurrection, gives us hope that we, too, will enjoy eternal life. This gives us the **freedom to act with justice and charity** towards our fellow human beings. It gives us the freedom to share our joy, to encourage women not to destroy human life, to help women in stress with shelter, medical care, and offer all the things in life that Jesus would want them to have. Hallelujah for the freedom to celebrate the meaning of Easter!

Man is created to love. He is here to lose himself. But it is also easy for him to withhold himself. Yet we recognize that what the ten commandments say is right. It is what we really want to do. We want to be good to other people. We want to respect the other. This is the spark of the Divine in our nature. (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI)

Crisis Pregnancy Centers Many provide prenatal and **post-natal support** to any woman wanting help. Centers like Options for Women, Choice One, First Way, Birth Right & Good Counsel are staffed by volunteers and supported by various charitable groups and churches. Pro-lifers do not abandon women after their babies are born.

Fighting for Religious Freedom

Faith-based organizations are continuing to have to battle in courtrooms around the country and prod legislators to pass laws to protect religious liberty in our nation.

"Our first and most cherished freedom, religious liberty, is to be enjoyed by all Americans, including child welfare providers who serve the needs of children, the most vulnerable members of society," the U.S. bishops wrote in a letter to Rep. Mike Kelly and Sen. Mike Enzi, sponsors of the **Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act** that would ensure that federal and state funds and contracts cannot be withheld from child welfare providers because they **refuse services out of conscience.**

"Faith-based organizations have always played an extraordinary role in caring for our nation's most vulnerable children. Millions of Americans are better off today because of their noble work," said Rep. Kelly. "No provider should ever have to forfeit their First Amendment rights in order to create a better life for a child."

[*The Beacon*, Paterson Diocese, editorial, 3/19/15]

Teachers' Morality Clause Controversy

Take statements from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and ask Catholic schools to affirm Catholic positions on chastity, contraception, homosexuality, human cloning and marriage. How is that controversial? That's what San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone is asking state lawmakers who had written him that morality clauses send an "alarming message of intolerance to youth." The archbishop's response letter asked the lawmakers if they would hire campaign managers who undermined their political party: "I respect your right to employ or not employ whomever you wish to advance your mission. **I simply ask the same respect from you.**"

Robert Destro, a law professor at the Columbus School of Law, Catholic U., said: "If the First Amendment means anything, it means that Catholics are free to believe and to act on views about the **freedom to choose who to love and marry**, how to plan a family and what causes or beliefs to support through freedom of speech and association that are diametrically opposed to the values of these politicians – and, for that matter, that are opposed to whatever the 'values' of the entire Bay Area might be. Opposition is the **essence of evangelization.**"

[Brian Fraga, *Our Sunday Visitor*, 3/8/15]

Freedom to Assist Taking Another's Life?

The renewed push to legalize 'aid in dying' or 'death with dignity,' as some euphemistically call it, is the result of positive media coverage in the wake of a young terminally ill woman's decision to end her life. Some faced with serious illness consider taking their lives because they fear they will be a burden to others or have no one to care for them. For others this choice is a declaration of personal autonomy: **'It is my life to do with what I want.'**

But how can we claim we have power over our own life? Which of us chose the date, time or conditions of our birth? Who of us gets to choose the path that will lead to our death -- will it be an accident, a random act of violence, a sudden heart attack or a prolonged illness? Human logic tells us that we are never completely in control of our lives. And God's word convinces us of this as well. **Each of us is a steward, not the master, of our own life.**

Even as the media focused on a dying woman from California, a similarly ill college freshman in Ohio vowed never to give up. Despite the seeming hopelessness of her situation, she professed her belief that God has the last say. This young woman has found a purpose in her suffering and insists that she still loves life. [Sister Constance Veit, *The Beacon*, Paterson, NJ, Diocese, 3/5/15]

Assisted-suicide laws in the U.S. permit aiding those who want to die if they are critically ill and have six months or less to live. In deciding whether to continue living in the face of suffering and pain, the determining factor has become the **elusive notion** of 'the quality of life' that could include a variety of conditions. This stems from the inability to accept suffering. Where there is no belief in God, neither suffering nor death has any meaning. But for believers, God values human life. **Our worth is not determined by our physical condition at any particular moment.**

The ease with which countries, including ours, are moving to a wider acceptance and promotion of ending people's lives is frightening. Western civilization has become detached from its Judaeo-Christian roots, leading to a collapse of morality. 'Aid to the terminally ill,' 'death with dignity,' 'compassionate care' are slogans of mercy that mask the real issue of **denying fundamental value to human life.** [Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli, *The Beacon*, 3/19/15]

Note: Many parishes provide brochures on end-of-life issues. If yours doesn't, ask your pastor.

this issue edited by Frank Tinari, Ph.D., tinarifr@shu.edu

End-of-Life Website Launched The New York Catholic Conference has launched **catholicendoflife.org** that provides links to resources, Church teaching, advance directives and a variety of Catholic sources. In a Feb. 9 interview with the *Daily News*, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of NY said he and the state's other Catholic bishops have put a high priority on fighting any effort to legalize physician-assisted suicide. Joining the Catholic Church are evangelical Christians, Orthodox Jews and Mormons.

In their 2011 statement on assisted suicide, *To Live Each Day with Dignity*, the U.S. bishops declared assisted **suicide is something "that a compassionate society should work to prevent.** A society that devalues some people's lives, by hastening and facilitating their deaths, will ultimately lose respect for their other rights and freedoms." [Our Sunday Visitor, 3/8/15]

Let us pray for all those who may be victimized by this latest advance of the culture of death. May our words and actions always convey the great worth of all persons, no matter their condition or circumstances. To do your part, visit www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/diocesan-pro-life-offices.cfm [Tom Grenchik, *Beacon*, 3/12/15]

Wife's Donation of Eggs is Grounds for Discussion

That's the heading of a recent **Dear Abby** column. The secular viewpoint is instructive to us Catholics in that there are sound scientific reasons for opposing anonymous egg donation, as well as moral reasons. Here is what the woman said:

My husband is against sperm and egg donation "because any kids we would potentially have might end up dating their half-siblings. ... Should I tell my husband about my egg donations in my early 20s? I do know that some of my eggs were successfully transplanted. We don't have kids, but are talking about trying in the near future. Would it be wrong for them to go out into the world not knowing about their **half-siblings?**"

Abby told her to tell her husband, and "If you do decide to start a family, considering that there are half-siblings out there, it would be wise to advise your children to have **genetic testing** done with their spouses." [Newark *Star-Ledger*, 3/31/15]

The brave new world that our culture is creating is taking us further away from the **natural law**, from sound beliefs and guidelines about life, to bizarre manipulations and questionable practices.