

## Advent and Christmas Bring New Life

### “Miracle” Surgery on Baby in the Womb

A recent story in the *NY Times* described in detail the incredible surgery on “the patient within the patient” – a 24-week-old baby in utero suffering from a severe form of spina bifida.

An **experimental technique** was used to repair a “significant lesion” on the back of the tiny growing baby. The doctors physically lifted the uterus, baby intact, out of the mother but still connected to her. They performed the most delicate of surgeries while sweating in a high-temperature room to keep the baby comfortable.

The Church doesn’t accept all reproductive science techniques, but this one was a winner. As Saint Pope John Paul stated in 1983: “A strictly therapeutic intervention whose explicit objective is the **healing** of various maladies such as those stemming from chromosomal defects will, in principle, be considered desirable, provided it is directed to the true promotion of the personal well-being of the individual without doing harm to his integrity or worsening his conditions of life. Such an intervention would fall within the logic of the **Christian moral tradition**. [Gretchen R. Crowe, “A Miraculous Surgery on ‘the Patient Within the Patient’” *Our Sunday Visitor*, 11/5/17]

### Go Along to Get Along ... But on Abortion are We Catholics

**Too Silent?** • Leonardo da Vinci: Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence. • Albert Einstein: If I were to remain silent, I’d be guilty of complicity. • Elie Wiesel: We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. • Mahatma Gandhi: Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth & acting accordingly. • Martin Luther King Jr.: One has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.

### Georgetown Pro-Marriage Group Faces Possible Sanctions

Love Saxa, a Georgetown University student group that promotes **Catholic doctrine regarding marriage** is being threatened with expulsion due to claims by “gay pride” student organizations that it fosters intolerance by actively advocating a limited definition of marriage. The Catholic group believes that “marriage is a **conjugal union** on every level – emotional, spiritual, physical and mental – directed toward caring for biological children. It is more than a love commitment between two consenting adults.” The group explained that it advocates on other issues such as opposing pornography and resisting a “hookup culture” on college campuses. A decision has not been issued by the Student Activities Commission. [CNA/ EWTN News, *National Catholic Register*, 11/12/17]

### Science Shows Mothers’ Nurturing Needed for the First 1,000 Days

Motherhood no longer seems to be as American as apple pie. Although a liberal Manhattan Democrat, Erica Komisar and her book have been rebuffed and rejected by the liberal media outlets, being told repeatedly that “you are going to make women feel badly.” But she insists she is just using science to discover the truth about motherhood.

Ms. Komisar’s book, *Being There: Why Prioritizing Motherhood in the First Three Years Matters*, says research in psychology, neuroscience and epigenetics shows that “**mothers are biologically necessary for babies**,” and not only for the obvious reasons of pregnancy and birth. “Babies are much more neurologically fragile than we’ve ever understood.” Neuroscientist Nim Tottenham of Columbia University says “that babies are born without a central nervous system” and “mothers are the central nervous system to babies,” especially in the first 9 months after birth.

“Every time a mother comforts a baby in distress, she’s actually **regulating that baby’s emotions** from the outside in. After 3 years, the baby internalizes that ability to regulate his or her emotions, but not until then.” For that reason, mothers “need to be there as much as possible, both physically & emotionally, for children in the first 1,000 days.”

The regulatory mechanism is **oxytocin**, a neurotransmitter popularly known as the “love hormone.” Oxytocin, Ms. Komisar explains, “is a buffer against stress.” **Mothers produce it** when they give birth, breastfeed or otherwise nurture their children. “The more oxytocin the mother produces, the more she produces it in the baby” by communicating via eye contact, touch and gentle talk. The baby’s brain in turn develops oxytocin receptors, which allow for self-regulation at a later age.

**Women produce more oxytocin than men do.** People “want to feel that men and women are fungible,” observes Ms. Komisar—but they aren’t, at least not when it comes to parental roles. Fathers produce a “different nurturing hormone” known as vasopressin, “what we call the protective, aggressive hormone.” Whereas a mother of a crying baby will “lean into the pain and say, ‘Oh, honey!’” a father is more apt to tell the child: “You’re OK. Brush yourself off; let’s go

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back to play.” Boys especially need that paternal nurturing to learn to control their aggression & become self-sufficient. But during childhood’s first stages, motherly love is more vital.

When the mother can’t be there, Ms. Komisar says, the best alternative is a “single surrogate caregiver,” optimally a relative. “The thing I dislike the most is daycare,” she says. “It’s really not appropriate for children under the age of 3,” because it is “overstimulating” given their neurological undevelopment. Regarding paid maternity leave: “Babies are just waking up from birth after six weeks, and **even at three months** they are incredibly vulnerable and not necessarily bonded with their mothers.”

[James Taranto, *Wall Street Journal*, 10/28/17]

**The Pain Unborn Children Feel**

The public debate over whether unborn children feel pain has resurfaced, due to the recent passing of the “Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act” that cites evidence that the **unborn child can feel pain 20 weeks after fertilization**, & therefore makes it a crime for anyone to execute an abortion at or past this age unless it is necessary to save the life of the mother or the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

What is this pain that unborn children feel? The bill cites the presence of sensory receptors that respond to painful or injurious stimuli. This wiring, so to speak, is present throughout the entire body and linked to the growing brain very early in a child’s life. By 20 weeks, when the wiring is complete, developing babies **react to stimuli by recoiling**, & experience a significant **increase in stress hormones**.

Abortion advocates say that physical circuitry alone is not enough to feel pain. According to a 2005 research review in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, pain is “an emotional and psychological experience that requires conscious recognition of a noxious stimulus.” But pro-life advocates remind the public that even **newborn children** cannot explain what their pain feels like. Newborns are routinely assessed for pain based on observation of responses, such as facial expression, limb motion and squirming activity, the same kinds of physical indicators observed in 20-week-old unborn children. Nevertheless, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), representing more than 57,000 ob-gyns, issued a fact sheet in 2013 stating that a fetus does not have the physiological capacity to perceive pain emotionally and psychologically until at least 24 weeks of gestation.

Abortion advocates summarily oppose any restrictions to abortion because to give an inch is to concede the humanity

of the unborn. Pro-life advocates remind them that unborn children, in fact, react so much to pain-inducing stimuli that **doctors give them anesthesia** before performing fetal surgery. Besides relaxing the womb, the anesthesia reduces the stress response in the unborn child so that the child will feel less pain after the surgery and heal faster.

If abortion advocates would stick to the simple fact that a human life begins at fertilization and that all humans have the right to life, then there would be no need for a “Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act” in the first place. Since they are unwilling to adhere to strict science regarding the beginning of life, pro-life advocates must work to take **smaller steps in the right direction** by convincing the public of the humanity of the unborn child.

The pro-life logic is straightforward and sound. Whether a child has developed enough to feel pain or not, however pain is defined, the innocent child is still worthy of dignity, life and unconditional love. Period. This is not hard to grasp intellectually, and it ought to be a minimum requirement in a country that pledges liberty and justice for all. [Stacy A. Trasancos, *National Catholic Register*, 11/11/17]

Pro-life groups in New Jersey are promoting legislation similar to that passed by the U.S. House. Elective abortions of unborn babies would be **prohibited after 20 weeks** in the womb. The “20/20” project is seeking the public’s support. A video and more information may be found at: [www.babiesinthewombfeelpain.com](http://www.babiesinthewombfeelpain.com)

**Being Catholic Pro-Life in a Nutshell**

*Life in all its stages is sacred and to be respected*

1. Casual sex is not worth the risks
2. Unplanned pregnancy needs to be faced honestly and with loving support
3. Abortion has many bad physical & emotional effects
4. Healing is possible for those who have had an abortion
5. It is best to be chaste until marriage
6. Marriage is a sacrament between a man and a woman
7. Family planning should use natural means
8. Children are a gift from God
9. Sick or elderly people are to be given normal care and relief of pain
10. Suicide and assisted suicide are morally wrong
11. Abuse of a person by another is always wrong
12. Use of another person as an object is sinful
13. The church offers healing from the effects of all types of abuse
14. Help and protection is to be offered to all human beings, whether sick or poor or elderly or unborn