

VERSION 1:
'The Eloquence of Truth' —
three paths to freedom

Poetry
Prose
&
Authority

THE
ELOQUENCE
OF
TRUTH

- three paths to freedom

by

Ralph Wright OSB

FOREWORD

It is a critical time in the United States for Catholics. We are moving towards an election that could be critical for our country and, because of our influence— so often misinterpreted by the media — also for the world. The next decade will see the world take some kind of stand on matters that deeply concern our dignity as human beings. Are we to become a world playground, a huge laboratory in which experiments will be made to produce hybrids of human beings with animals? We have legalized the killing of our unborn children are we now to legalize the production of humans blended with pigs or with any number of other animals that our riotous imaginations may produce? Talk about the war against terror, whether in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan or elsewhere, and talk about the economy pale in comparison with these issues that concern authorizing procedures that could jeopardize the future of our very species.

This booklet aims at clarifying for a Catholic the “almost divine dignity of every human being” as Pope John Paul called it in his encyclical ‘The Gospel of Life’. It’s goal is to make more readily and powerfully available to a Catholic what we believe about our nature as human beings, what we believe to be the Creator’s will for our procreation as children of God, and in what manner this will is to be respected in our behavior. ‘The Eloquence of Truth’ attempts to do this by approaching the matter through poetry, through prose and through select citations from the authoritative teaching of the Church. Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, entrusted to his apostles, and in a particular way to Peter, their head, the duty of proclaiming his gospel to the ends of the earth. John Paul eloquently taught that the Gospel of the dignity of the human being, the Gospel of God’s love for Man and the Gospel of Life are inextricably bound together as one Gospel. This booklet attempts to demonstrate this. May it help those who share the Catholic faith to inform their consciences on these matters. May it help them become more deeply aware of these critical issues. And finally may it guide them to vote for a president who will be able to give courageous, wise and dynamic leadership in all that concerns human life especially at its most vulnerable stages.

Recently Archbishop Chaput of Denver wrote as follows: “There is no way for Catholics to finesse their way around the abortion issue, and if we’re serious about being “Catholic”, we need to stop trying. No such thing as a “right” to kill an unborn child exists. And wriggling past that simple truth by redefining the unborn child as an unperson, a pre-human lump of cells, is the worst sort of Orwellian hypocrisy— especially for Christians. Abortion always involves the deliberate killing of an innocent human life, and it is always, inexcusably, grievously wrong. This fact in no way releases us from the duty to provide ample and compassionate support for unwed or abandoned mothers, women facing unwanted pregnancies, and women struggling with the aftermath of an abortion. But the inadequacy of that support demands that we work to improve it. It does not justify killing the child.”

On August 3rd 2008 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian writer, died in Moscow aged 89. In 1970 he won the Nobel prize for literature. I refer several times in this booklet to the text of the talk that, ironically, he was not able to deliver in person being forbidden by the soviet authorities to leave the country and go to Oslo for this purpose. It concerns the role of the artist in the communication of truth. His life and work are a profound testimony that when people are at odds about what is True or what is Good the Artist through Beauty is sometimes able to

convince by creating a work of art, an 'argument' , that is beyond dispute. With his life and philosophy to inspire us may we continue to pray and work to let our fellow human beings know the truth about our 'almost divine dignity'.

Ralph Wright OSB

August 2008

PROLOGUE

The immeasurable value of each human being in the eyes of God is an essential part of the Catholic faith. Awareness of this truth gives us a new freedom. How do we come to believe this truth and how may we communicate it to other people who share our faith?

- 1)The approach of poetry.
- 2)The approach of prose
- 3)The approach of authoritative teaching.

‘May you find the courage to proclaim Christ, “the same, yesterday, and today and for ever” and the unchanging truths which have their foundation in him. These are the truths that set us free! They are the truths which alone can guarantee respect for the inalienable dignity and rights of each man, woman and child in our world — including the most defenseless of all human beings, the unborn child in the mother’s womb.’ *Pope Benedict XVI Yankee Stadium New York 20 April 2008*

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God Has Called Us out of Darkness
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THE ELOQUENCE
OF POETRY

the mystery of joy

The Father utters

The Father utters
a Word
which a virgin
receives

the Spirit speaks
and the virgin who listens
utters
the Word

heard
once by the prophets
the Word now speaks
while the world listens

to the mercy and myriad
wonders the Father
utters

Annuntiation

The acute load of a great joy
 needles my heart
and seethes within the tissues of my brain —
the thought that this the face of man became,
 on some brief long-forgotten day,
 the face of God — and will remain.
O may this joy beneath life's puzzling goad
 each day explode!

Becoming Man

The humble moment
of total fusion
in darkness
and silence
seen by no one
heard by no one
felt by no one
a greater detonation
than any nuclear fission
and for a long while yet
no one will know it has happened.

When

When
God
made
you
there
was
silence
in
heaven
for
five
minutes.

Then
God
said:

"How come I never thought of *that* before?"

I listened to the sound of rain

I listened to the sound of rain
upon the leaves
approaching with the wind
—the rain and wind were still some woods away

I listened to the terror of the wind
upon the leaves in anger tearing them
untimely out of life and swirling them
at random in the dark upon the ground

I listened to the calm that came
from nowhere on the leaves
when suddenly the angry air was gone
I heard them welcome with relief
the newborn silence of the night
and watch in awe for dawn

Birthday utterance

I have great joy
in knowing that you
have been
born
into the world
because
having been breathed
by God
into existence
you will never
be able
— like a bubble —
to pop
suddenly
back into nothingness

welcome
to this one great
champagne
dancing
party of being

and be
always
alive and utterly
grateful to Him
who
simply freely spontaneously
needlessly and
eternally
utters

Every Christian Mother

every Christian mother
watches God
in her first-born
come
into the world
and with amazed
shocked
wonder
knows that the mystery
of Love
eluding
the handling of the mind
resembles more
twin squirrels
chasing each other
on either side
of a tree
than crashes of thunder
waking us at midnight
to Wagnerian lightning

chefs d'oeuvres
for Carol

they say
we are God's
work of art
his masterpiece
each
made in his image

if so
each child of ours
is our work of art
our masterpiece
and each
is a Leonardo

The Mist Lifts

the mist lifts
for a moment
over the why of creation
as I see
God
making each person
with the identical
wonder and joy
of making
Jesus

Ground for Joy

My past lies
in the merciful hands of God
my future
in his wise love
the present moment
in which I live
is of no duration
how then may fear win
mastery over my joy?

mysteries of light

through a glass darkly

only a thin
film of glass
protects the moth
as it bangs
again and again
against the light
in the dark night
from the sizzle
of extinction

Woman

within her
and of her being
comes one to be
who will not cease

she speaks each day
God's Word made men
uttered again, again
and again
into our silence

hers is a dignity
that none may measure
hers a patience
refined by fire
hers a majesty
unperceived
in the painful tedium
of giving birth

the mystery
of her being
echoes the mystery
of God creating

and out of darkness
Light

Pyrogenetics

the widening mystery of exploding light
dazzles our mind

Queen Anne's lace grows in milliseconds
and dies at once in half a mile of sky
purple turquoise gold and dazzling red
flares carve glory in the night
then fall back into nothingness

God in miniature
brings pilot galaxies into random being
snuffing them out in falling golden rain
amid a million gasps of stunned delight

one sudden cloudburst
hangs a cage above us in the air
a 14 ct chandelier of fire
descending slowly over frail skulls

and yet in all this masterpiece
poured out across the canvas of the dark
looms stark our human brevity
behind the blind amazement of our pyromania
still peer through
the petty twinklings of the Big Time stars

Whiteout

in our blinding maelstrom
of cataracting facts
—light gone wild
with every color
warring for control—
upon the wide screen
of the mind
faith comes
a lens to focus
fuzzy dancing images
into the calm of Truth:
the One uttering and
—a fact that even a glimpse of
risks melting down intelligence—
the Many
—mes and yous—
brought from nothingness
into the
infinite dignity
of Co-eternity

The
astronomic
nature
of
God's
love
for
me
is
revealed
by
my
repentance

unbar
the
doors
and
let
the
dawn
light
blaze
in
!

the mystery of how it does it

the mystery of how it does it—

the gene that runs the intuition
or maps the building of the brain

the gene that runs the bat's non-vision
the chip that runs the IBM

the gene that guides the artist's hand
from point to point with such precision

the gene that weeps at all that suffers
peering deep into the dark

the gene that makes a Paganini,
the Brandenbergs of J-S Bach

that knows the love your goodness kindles
in my heart to hear you laugh

God Has Called Us out of Darkness

God has called us out of darkness
To the wonder of his light.
See your dignity, O Christian,
Rescued from eternal night.
See the glory of your calling,
Brothers, sisters of the Lord,
Calling God himself your Father
Through the love he has outpoured.

From the moment that he forms us
In the womb, until we die
We are his eternal children
With a destiny on high.
May we live by this great vision,
May we share this gift of sight,
May we serve beyond the darkness
All who hunger for the light.

Turn away from all corruption,
Be a sign before the world
Of the love the Father shows us
In his gentle mighty Word.
Be the light upon the lampstand,
Be the city on the hill.
Be the men and women toiling,
Seeking but the Father's will.

Father, hear your children call you
In the name of Christ your Son;
Send the Spirit whom he promised
That in him we may be one.
Then the world will come to know you
In the Son who came and died,
For your love will be reflected
In the mirror of our lives.

He Told the Time in Light Years

He told the time in light years
—they used to say —
watching the stars poised
against the night
telling that man was brief
sudden to fall
a shooting star rather than autumn leaf
small
drifting in vacuo

he told the time in light years meaning that God
did more becoming man than man can know
he told the time in light years to unblind
the mind of man unto the real calm
of simply being

tired light
reaching across the distance without end
claiming it once was stars

they used to say
he told the time in light years to remind
himself and others who might care to ask
that time remains uttered by God for good
simply the toy of childhood

The Big Myth Is That There's Too Little Light

The big myth is that there's too little light
for us to see by — but there's far too much.
The shadows from small gravel in the dusk,
the magic and magnificence of seasons,
or leaves turning from green to gold or rust —
are all too full of the mind of the Creator,
they leave us blinded and absorbed by dust

Dust is our medium and we mold it firm
to build a plastic heart and reach the moon.
Things have become idols and our minds
feed on distractions leaving little room
for silence or monogamy in prayer.
Someone has opened the camera to expose
our vision to the swift assault of light.
All of our wonder is being drowned by dust.
O not too little light but far too much!

Light

A billion stars and constellations
tell the absurdity of the incarnation.
Could the hand that poised sun and moon
have grown fingers in a young girl's womb?
So a star was chosen
bold as a bell
to flash the word
'Emmanuel!'

**the mystery
of sorrow**

abort

Do to others
what *you* can do
because they didn't
do it to you.

A Meditation on the Need for Darkness

somewhere a star was growing slowly old
in the uninfinte a light was dying
exchanging heat for cold and day for night
achieving a new darkness into which
sperm could be uttered to create a God

fire condensed to lava and became
through far millennia a cool dark earth
water and rock and air and even ice
were slowly there

leave room for the darkness, darling, leave me room
carry me, mother, carry me in your womb
towards eternity patiently into being

think what millennia did first gestate
with none, thank God, save God to count and wait
(who being eternal logically couldn't)
for all to happen

we are just one
one of a million million — how the mind
becomes so easily drunk with multiplicity
and reels accordingly —
one of a million million finite things
born of a burnt-out lump of coal
flung from the hearth of incandescent light
onto the cold floor of night
like a picked bone to a hungry pup

God too was born of darkness became Man
Christ needed like new grain the darkness too
to hit the earth and die in giving birth —
he was enwombed enfleshed and then emboned
undarknessed into being and embraced
there in the lamplit stable then not now —

leave room for the darkness, darling, leave me room

carry me, mother, carry me in your womb
towards eternity patiently into being

the awe would scorch our minds if we had not
gloved it in clumsy concepts to protect
us from explosion

he came but half an hour ago or less
in cosmomanic terms into our world
a world
that once was light but had to be
a cold beacon of darkness to become
a womb unto its god

leave room for the darkness, darling, leave me room
carry me, mother, carry me in your womb
towards eternity patiently into being

the crumble moment of our frail words
ceilings against our heads

the cold star wombs the utterance of God
a universe prepares new silence
just for the possibility of sound
(and the Word was made Flesh)
the world achieves new darkness to leave room
for eyes to wonder at the fact of light
(and leave, it must be said, room for the blind)
the Potter finds a way to fashion slime
from which might grow these hands
— both His and mine

leave room for the darkness, darling, leave me room
carry me, mother, carry me in your womb
towards eternity patiently into being

Truncate

Redwood trees
have soared in silence
for thousands of years
along our shores
their age
their calm
their dignity
command respect

scions thrusting
from the roots of Jesse
across our land
towards eternity
are axed daily
without awe
out of being

Mental Health in Britain¹

womb vacant
danger gone
foetus dead
health restored

womb vacant
child gone
faith dead
health restored

womb vacant
foetus gone
God dead
health restored

womb vacant
child dead
hope gone
God save the Queen!

¹ Written in 1967 on the occasion of the Bill passed in Parliament that legalized abortion.

Nails

It is the consequences
of our actions
that condemn
by their enormity
the moments of our weakness

each moment of blind folly
blazing
whether behind the wheel, the blade
or in the bed
begets
undreamt of sadness

taboos used
to keep, like barbed wire,
us from our lusts

now
taboos are gone
and we abuse
God's mercy

we claim the freedom
to make children
of fake love
and temporary union

we claim the freedom
to hire our minds
for a passing high
and, bored with being
merely human,
aim to be briefly gods

we authorize
a mother who
cannot forget
the babe she feeds

to kill her child
before she sees its face

and if a mother
is authorized
to kill her child
what's to stop me, brother,
kicking you
out of my womb

we have no care
for all that is and breathes
upon our planet
and are prepared
to blow it at one puff
all out of being

but God who once
watched his Son
nailed by man
and left to die
still watches and accepts
the consequences
of making man
able to love
and — when he fails —
even of making nails

Glory!

I have felt
the crucifixion
of the Word
upon the sidewalk
after the heavy rain
and the sound
was like one screaming
“I am a man
and no worm!”
but in the darkness
my foot
ignored
His glory

Finally, there was the Harley Street doctor who is alleged to sell foetuses to soap factories... This gynaecologist said. "Local residents in the vicinity of my clinic have been complaining about the smell of burning flesh. The smell comes from the incinerator. It does make a stink. They say it smells like a Nazi extermination camp during the last war...So I am always looking for ways of disposing of the foetuses other than burning them..."²

FIAT LUX! ³

They're selling babyflesh for soap in London
if we may still believe *The Times*
because the neighbors moaned about
the smell of burning foetus
and were thinking "Holocaust".

In backup industries to contraceptives,
like Reproductive Services,
all systems are at "Go".

The writer used to make his stories live
by shrewd distortion,
but if a mother lets this happen to
her real child
in real death
what can we now distort?

So wash your hands in Lux and say
(for "What is truth?")
"I am innocent of the death of this child."
then go —
the scent should last the day.

² from an article by Ronald Butt in *The Times* of London 14 July 1977

³ *Fiat Lux* a Latin phrase that may be translated "Let there be light." The soap brand name is used generically with no suggestion that the makers of this soap are being referred to in Mr Ronald Butt's article.

Problem of Evil

God made Man free
to get things wrong:
He made the atom,
we the bomb

Desecration

we are terrifyingly blind
to what we are doing
and what is going on—

petri dishes
cradle conception
trading the human temple
of divine intimacy
for mere chemistry

the act
God chose
to echo His eternal being,
is robbed of ecstasy

and human biology
ceases
to have its roots
in a oneflesh union
of persons

Ultrasound

a man who does not love
the brother
that he can see
(in the womb)
cannot
love
God
whom he has never seen

the mystery of glory

Although Dust

Although dust
I am loved
by the one
eternal
Son of the Father
just as intensely
as this same Father
loves his one
eternal Son

O mystery
O majesty
O wonder
that what we
in our wildest dreams
could not conceive
has been
by God's own Word
quietly revealed

Infinite Patience

God lets
his Son
be stretched
against
the earth
and nailed
to the wood
of the world
behold
the mystery
of infinite
patience
that
God
should create
a being
able
to see
and love
or blindly
hate
then patiently
wait
and not
stop
the entire
show
when an innocent
child
weeps in the
night
or his Son
is stretched
against
the world
and brutally
nailed

Godlight

When God became in Jesus Christ
a man
and he who holds within his hand
the universe
now lay within the arms of her
who gave him birth
then man could see
that it no longer had to be
beyond belief
— or just some wild illusion —
that he should share one day the life of God
without confusion
but that the gentle fury of the Light
could blaze without alarm
within the darkened confines of his flesh
to bring him calm

Cheery Thought on a Rainy Morning

if You didn't need to
but only made me
because You loved me
what an unbelievably
marvellous being
I must be
designed
by the One Lover
only to be
perfectly beloved

Great Calm

I am filled with joy
that God loves you
with great competence
for my love is infinite
in clumsiness—
when I wound
He heals
when I damage
He restores
and you are always
in his hands
O great calm
O mighty God
O quiet joy

From All eternity

from all eternity
You made me
as if to be
your only spouse
in time
may I choose You
to be mine

'As Your Heavenly Father'

because You see
in me
the one Jesus
You proclaim
the one excellence
—His word —
wherein no spot
or wrinkle
of evil or medi-
ocrity may be
for even a moment
found tolerable

because You love
in me
your only Son
therefore must I
love my enemies,
forgive those
who nail me naked,
give to all who ask and be
pure of every whim
of lust as lovely woman
crosses my path

because You love
in me
— distorted though I am
from birth —
all the one Jesus
that I am
You long so
long so
long so patiently, gently
for me to surrender
me to You
that in me You can say

—as in Jesus —
what I can
I will
I am

Conceive

to bring
and to have brought
into being
through God

one called
to live forever
intimately
with God

what a stunning
mind-scalding
thing to do
and to have done

could anything
conceivably
be greater—
none

Yes!

save my wolves
and
save my woods
and
save my owls
but
every time
you
save a child
you save Christ!

When the Last River

When the last river has let its waters
 meet the sea
 when the last cloud has let its rain
 touch the waves
when the last breeze has brought coolness
 to the face of man
 and the last sun has bowed its head
 behind the mountains
I will reach down and raise you up
 says the Lord
 to be with me your brother
 for ever.

THE ELOQUENCE OF PROSE

Nonchalantly Crossing the Bioethics Rubicon

1) CATHOLIC THEOLOGY BACKGROUND

To understand the true significance of the recent developments in biotechnology it will be good to glance briefly at certain aspects of Catholic teaching as articulated by Pope John Paul II in what has become known as his Theology of the Body. This is expressed with clarity by Christopher West in the following passage from his book *Good News About Sex and Marriage*.

As male and female we make visible God's invisible mystery.

What is God's invisible mystery? St John sums it up well: "God is love"(1Jn4:8). We often think of this verse in terms of God's love for us. That's part of its meaning. But even before God's love for us, he is love *in himself*, in the relationship of the three Persons of the Trinity. God is in himself a life-giving *Communion of Persons*. The Father, from all eternity, is making a gift of himself in love to the Son. And the Son, eternally receiving the gift of the Father, makes a gift of himself back to him. The love between them is so real, so profound, that this love *is* another eternal Person — the Holy Spirit.

Among other things, this is what our being made in the image and likeness of God reveals: we're called to love as God loves, in a life-giving *communion of persons*. And we do this specifically as male and female. The man is disposed in his very being towards making the gift of himself to the woman. And the woman is disposed in her very being toward receiving the gift of the man into herself and giving herself back to him. And the love between them is so real, so profound, that, God willing, it may become another human person.

Thus sexual intercourse itself is meant to participate in the very life and love of God. Sexual intercourse itself reveals (makes visible) the invisible mystery of God.

Sex is so beautiful, so wonderful, so glorious that it's meant to express God's free, total, faithful, and fruitful love. Another name for this kind of love is marriage⁴

If this well describes the mysterious character of our male and female sexuality in terms of our likeness to God the following quote from the document *Donum Vitae*, an 'instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and the Dignity of Procreation, that emerged from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1987, places the teaching more in the language of ethics or canon law.

From the moment of conception, the life of every human being is to be respected in an absolute way because man is the only creature on earth that God has "wished for himself" and the spiritual soul of each man is "immediately created" by God; his whole being bears the image of the Creator. Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves "the creative action of God" and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can, in any circumstance, claim to

⁴ Good News About Sex & Marriage. Christopher West Servant Publications, Michigan 2000 p.19 & 20

himself the right to destroy an innocent human being.

Human procreation requires on the part of the spouses responsible collaboration with the fruitful love of God; the gift of human life must be actualized in marriage through the specific and exclusive acts of husband and wife in accordance with the laws inscribed in their persons and in their union.⁵ .

2) TWO RUBICONS

I was a little startled this summer when visiting my family in England to read in one of the morning newspapers that the Commission on Fertility had given the go-ahead for research scientists to proceed with human cloning for purely therapeutic purposes. The cloned human apparently was to be used to provide healthy cells to combat disease in the person whose cell tissue was being used to ‘produce’ the clone. With such apparent casualness or nonchalance a small group of human beings authorize a whole new way of bringing new members of their own species into being. But, if this movement towards crossing the Rubicon of cloned humanity seems to be going on with very little, if any, background ‘world furor’, I am not sure that we should be *that* surprised. The major Rubicon in the history of human reproduction was crossed many years ago and probably few people saw it as anything but a blessing. The advent of the ‘test-tube child’. This is how the account is given in the *World of Health* of the experiments and procedures that gave rise to the implantation in the womb of Mrs Leslie Brown of the ‘conceptus’ Joy Louise Brown who was born 25 July 1978 in Oldham Hospital, England.

“In 1966 (Dr Patrick)Step toe teamed with Cambridge University physiologist Robert G.Edwards to propel his work with fertility problems. Utilizing ovaries removed for medical reasons Edwards had pioneered the fertilization of eggs outside of the body. With his laparoscope, Steptoe added the dimension of being able to secure mature eggs at the appropriate moment in the monthly cycle when fertilization would normally occur.A breakthrough for the duo came in 1968 when Edwards successfully fertilized an egg that Steptoe had extracted. Not until 1970, however, was an egg able to reach the stage of cell division — into about 100 cells— when it generally moves to the uterus. In 1972 the pair attempted the first implantation but the embryo failed to lodge in the uterus. Indeed, none of the women with implanted embryos carried them for a full trimester.

As their work progressed and word of it leaked out the researchers faced criticism from scientific and religious circles concerning the ethical and moral issues relating to tampering with the creation of human life. Some opponents considered the duo’s work akin to the scenario in Aldous Huxley’s 1932 work *Brave New World*, in which babies were conceived in the laboratory, cloned, and manipulated for society’s use. Members of parliament demanded an investigation and sources of funds were withdrawn. ...

In 1976 Steptoe met a thirty-year-old Leslie Brown, who experienced problems with her fallopian tubes. Steptoe removed a mature egg from her ovary, and Edwards fertilized the egg using her husband Gilbert’s sperm. The fertilized egg — implanted after two days— thrived, and on July 25, 1978, Joy Louise Brown, a healthy five pound twelve ounce girl was born in Oldham District and General Hospital. Even before the birth, reporters and cameramen congregated

⁵ Donum Vitae #5

outside of the four story brick hospital, hoping for a glimpse of the expectant mother. After the birth, according to an article in *Time* headlines in Britain heralded ‘OUR MIRACLE and BABY OF THE CENTURY.’^{6 7}

Later in the same article Steptoe is quoted as having told the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists that with ‘modified’ techniques ten percent of the in vitro fertilization attempts could succeed. He predicted that there “could one day be a fifty percent success rate for the procedure”. Whether that prophecy or prediction has been born out by what has happened worldwide since 1979 will be something for the appropriate statisticians to explore. For our purposes it will be sufficient to quote the observation by Drs Marie Anderson and John Bruchalski writing for the USCCB Respect Life Program for 2004 that at the time of writing more than 150,000 children have been born in the US as a result of ART(Assisted Reproductive Technology) This reminds us that the in-vitro-type event is no longer a news item for the American media.

Cloning on the other hand is still a much debated topic here in the United States. Drs Anderson and Bruchalski give this description of the process:

“Cloning is not only dangerous to the women exploited for their eggs, but utterly dehumanizing to the person cloned, whether for reproductive or research purposes. In this process an egg is surgically taken from the woman’s ovary which has been hormonally manipulated. The nucleus is removed from the egg, and the nucleus from a body cell of the individual to be cloned is transferred into the empty egg and fused with an electric current. The donor of the somatic cell then becomes the genetic parent of his or her own identical twin.”⁸

3)WHAT’S WRONG WITH THE PROCEDURES?

The Creator has revealed to us through his Word that we are made male and female in his image. The one flesh union of indissoluble marriage, the Covenant of Love, is to be the setting for our co-laborating with God in bringing into being persons who are called to a life of loving union with the three persons of the Holy Trinity. The loving sexual union of the husband and wife is, in the divine plan, to be the origin of each new person. God, from the moment that the material elements, the sperm and the egg, are united and begin dividing as a single entity, the moment of conception, ensouls the new human being. As Christopher West puts it in the passage quoted above the sheer beauty and wonder of this act of sexual intercourse makes visible the invisible mystery of the communion of persons that IS our Trinitarian God. And now what has happened? We have taken the most sublime act that two human beings can perform and replaced it with a procedure performed by physicians in a doctor’s office or a laboratory. In the conjugal act God had planned that the spouses in their supreme moment of loving union should become co-creators with him. Now the personal dimension is removed and instruments, laparoscope, petri dishes, vessels for holding sperm and ova become the ‘partners’ with the Creator for the

⁶ World of Health p.1119 ©2000 The Gale Group, Ed: Brigham Narins, Farmington Hills,MI 48331.

⁸ Assisted Reproductive Technologies Are Anti-Woman. Marie Anderson ,M.D.,FACOG and John Bruchalski, M.D. Respect Life Program© 2004 USCC

generation of his children, the brothers or sisters of his Son, Jesus. When human beings substitute such procedures for the 'Creator-designed' marital act in their attempts to procreate, they should be aware of the enormity of what they are doing. Clearly the language of the Catechism that outlaws such procedures is hardly an eloquent and persuasive account of how profoundly wrong these procedures are:

#2377 Techniques involving only the married couple (homologous artificial insemination and fertilization) are perhaps less reprehensible, yet remain morally unacceptable. They disassociate the sexual act from the procreative act. The act which brings the child into existence is no longer an act by which two persons give themselves to one another, but one that "entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person. Such a relationship of domination is in itself contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children." "Under the moral aspect procreation is deprived of its proper perfection when it is not willed as the fruit of the conjugal act, that is to say, of the specific act of the spouses' union.... Only respect for the link between the meanings of the conjugal act and respect for the unity of the human being make possible procreation in conformity with the dignity of the person."⁹

At best this is the language of the Professor of Medical ethics in University or Seminary; it will not be intelligible to your average Catholic of today's world. Yet I believe profoundly that the language of the Theology of the Body that West uses and the initial teaching of *Donum Vitae* quoted at the beginning of this paper *is* accessible to such a person. It is at the level of the mystery of our personal union with God and our awareness of the sacred character of our being, that people will come to see the truth and the profound importance for all humanity of the Church's teaching.

4) TRASH OR PEOPLE?

There is another aspect to this whole question that is profoundly disturbing. As you may have noticed from the quotation concerning Louise Brown, and the prophetic utterances of Dr Patrick Steptoe, there is a huge spin-off of failed attempts in the whole theater of the *in vitro*, now ART, procedures. For one who has no belief in the ensouling of the human being at conception, such failures are of relatively little significance. A physician might say: "I am trying to help Mr X and Mrs Y achieve a child and therefore if at first we don't succeed we will try, try and try again." Fair enough. In this context the implanting of several embryos, the later culling of the 'extra' ones if several of the implants 'take', is of small significance. Even the freezing of embryos for later implanting may seem acceptable and the disposal of such embryos if their 'shelf life' runs out will seem permissible to one who does not see them yet as human persons.. But what if one believes that from the moment of conception, way before the 100 cell divisions that Dr Steptoe said should happen before implantation could be likely to succeed, we have a human being and therefore one who has an immortal soul? What if we believe that God specifically took part in the procedure to create this soul at the moment of the fusion of the

⁹ *Donum Vitae* 2:4; & 2: 5.

sperm and the ovum in the petri dish? What if we believe that every culling of the extra implants is the killing of a human being? What if we believe that the keeping of thousands of frozen embryos, as it were stockpiled in fertility clinics, is analogous to creating some kind of embryo concentration Camp? How in these circumstances do we look upon these procedures.? Will we not find ourselves in honest fear and dread of our Creator? It was not for circumstances such as these, if we may follow his mind aright as articulated by his Church, that he would grace the union of the spouses with his instant by instant new creation of a new unique immortal person. He did not have sperm banks in mind; he did not have designer children in mind; he did not have the creation in mind of his children outside the context of the act of love. And this is so glaringly obvious *because he is Love* that we have to be blind not to see it. But in our 'technocracy' world where the common belief is that if Science *can* do something she has the right to do it, we are becoming blind to the enormity of what we are doing.. When it comes to asking, as happened in the late 1990s, a Catholic Cardinal Archbishop¹⁰ what he recommended should be done with the frozen embryos in a fertility clinic that was closing down, you really do detect the chaos and confusion that has set in. The argument against ART, as it now is, and cloning as it may soon be, is greatly intensified by considering this whole aspect that we have just been describing: the use/abuse , treatment and disposal of human beings in the earliest stages of their lives and the insult (Father, forgive us we know not what we do!) that such behavior objectively involves in the rejection of a being whose immortal soul has so recently been created directly by almighty God.

5)FINAL THOUGHTS

I have attempted to bring out the significance in Catholic teaching for both the methods of ART that replace the conjugal act with a technological procedure and for the devastating horrific spin-off in terms of discarded conceptuses and embryos that are part and parcel of these procedures. Many Catholic Doctors and Nurses are involved in these procedures. Many Catholic couples have resorted to these procedures to attempt, often successfully, to conceive a child. It is my belief that the Church should draw on all the means at her disposal to teach eloquently why these procedures are so gravely wrong. On the eve of our secular scientists catapulting us all into a world of clones we are in serious need of spiritual guidance. These are not matters of minor significance.

21 September 2004

¹⁰ Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster

William Wilberforce and the Right to Life

The life and work of the Member of Parliament from Yorkshire, William Wilberforce, may be an inspiration to all in our day who are working for the restoration of legal protection for the unborn children in our country and across the world. The twin missions of WW's life which he described as the 'suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners' have something to offer us today as we pursue our goal. So first a glance at who this man was.

There is a statue of William Wilberforce in Westminster Abbey close to where his bones were laid to rest on August 5th 1833. An epitaph, composed by his friend Macaulay, reads as follows:

TO THE MEMORY OF

William Wilberforce

(BORN IN HULL AUGUST 24th 1759,
DIED IN LONDON JULY 29th 1833)

FOR NEARLY HALF A CENTURY A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
AND, FOR SIX PARLIAMENTS DURING THAT PERIOD,
ONE OF THE TWO REPRESENTATIVES FOR YORKSHIRE
IN AN AGE AND COUNTRY FERTILE IN GREAT AND GOOD MEN,
HE WAS AMONG THE FOREMOST OF THOSE WHO FIXED THE
CHARACTER OF THEIR TIMES
BECAUSE TO HIGH AND VARIOUS TALENTS
TO WARM BENEVOLENCE, AND TO UNIVERSAL CANDOUR,
HE ADDED THE ABIDING ELOQUENCE OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

EMINENT AS HE WAS IN EVERY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LABOUR,
AND A LEADER IN EVERY WORK OF CHARITY,
WHETHER TO RELIEVE THE TEMPORAL OR THE SPIRITUAL WANTS OF HIS
FELLOW MEN
HIS NAME WILL EVER BE SPECIALLY IDENTIFIED
WITH THOSE EXERTIONS
WHICH, BY THE BLESSING OF GOD, REMOVED FROM ENGLAND
THE GUILT OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE,
AND PREPARED THE WAY FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY
IN EVERY COLONY OF THE EMPIRE:

IN THE PROSECUTION OF THESE OBJECTS,

HE RELIED, NOT IN VAIN, ON GOD;
BUT IN THE PROGRESS, HE WAS CALLED TO ENDURE
GREAT OBLOQUY AND GREAT OPPOSITION:
HE OUTLIVED, HOWEVER, ALL ENMITY:
AND, IN THE EVENING OF HIS DAYS,
WITHDREW FROM PUBLIC LIFE AND PUBLIC OBSERVATION
TO THE BOSOM OF HIS FAMILY.
YET HE DIED NOT UNNOTICED OR FORGOTTEN BY HIS COUNTRY:
THE PEERS AND COMMONS OF ENGLAND,
WITH THE LORD CHANCELLOR, AND THE SPEAKER, AT THEIR HEAD,
CARRIED HIM TO HIS FITTING PLACE
AMOUNG THE MIGHTY DEAD AROUND,
HERE TO REPOSE:
TILL, THROUGH THE MERITS OF JESUS CHRIST,
HIS ONLY REDEEMER AND SAVIOUR,
(WHOM, IN HIS LIFE AND IN HIS WRITINGS HE HAD DESIRED TO GLORIFY),
HE SHALL RISE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.

Wilberforce was still a young member of parliament for Yorkshire when he became involved with the Abolitionist movement. The circumstances leading to this should be briefly sketched. While at Cambridge in the late 1770s he met William Pitt, who would later become Prime Minister; this friendship was to last a lifetime and was a major influence on his political ambitions. But at this time WW was a lively fun-loving undergraduate not given to taking his religion too seriously. In October 1784 on the spur of the moment he invited Isaac Milner, who had been his teacher in Hull grammar school, to join him, his mother and his sister on a tour of the continent. In Milner's company long conversations took place and at one point William picked up and read Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. This was a moment for him similar to Augustine of Hippo's opening the Bible randomly at the letter of St Paul in response to hearing the voice of a child crying "Tolle lege! Tolle lege!" "Take it and read it! Take it and read it!" Augustine felt that this event marked a turning point in his becoming a Christian. For Wilberforce his conversations with Milner and his reading of Doddridge provoked a like conversion. After talking the matter over with John Newton, he became a strong active member of the evangelical movement in the Church of England. One member of this group was the comptroller of the navy, Sir Charles Middleton. At a meeting held in Sir Charles' home early in 1787 the Abolitionists invited Wilberforce to be their parliamentary spokesman and on October 28 of that same year he decided to accept their invitation. He wrote in his diary: 'God Almighty has set before me two great objects: the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.'

The Abolitionists had formed the 'Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' in May 1787. One of their members was Granville Sharp, who had been instrumental in bringing before Chief Justice Mansfield the case of James Somerset, a runaway slave. In June 1772

Mansfield had handed down a decision in this matter that had made the ‘odious’ state of slavery illegal in the British Isles. It did not however apply to the colonies. The Abolitionists who, besides Sharp, included Sir Charles Middleton, James Ramsay and Thomas Clarkson described their aim as follows:

“Our immediate aim is, by diffusing a knowledge of the subject, and particularly the Modes of procuring and treating slaves, to interest men of every description in the Abolition of the Traffic; but especially those from whom any alteration must proceed — the members of our Legislature.”¹¹

This ‘knowledge of the subject’ included facts gathered by Thomas Clarkson during the summer of 1787. Wilberforce’s presentation of these facts in speeches lasting three or four hours was a vital part of the building up of opposition to the slave trade in the House of Commons.

“Clarkson had

‘studied the size of slave ships, recorded the condition of the Middle Passage, took testimony from sailors, and bought various instruments such as shackles and thumbscrews. What he learned was alarming, to say the least. Slavers often raided the African coast in search of victims; or, more often, they bribed local chiefs with trinkets, guns, and liquor to war on their neighbors and provide the spoils as barter. Some chiefs began to oppress their own people by passing laws that carried slavery as the punishment for minor offenses. Kidnapping became pandemic. Slaves captured far inland were chained and marched for miles to the coast. Those who grew ill or weak were left to die; the slave tracks became strewn with human bones. Once on the coast, they were beaten and forced to enter the slave ships. On board they were handcuffed, chained, and stuffed in shelves with no room to move. During the Middle Passage from Africa to the West Indies, the slaves lay for weeks in their own refuse and vomit. The stench of the slave ships cast a foul cloud a mile over the ocean. The sailors often raped the black women, thus the ships were described as ‘half brothel and half bedlam.’ Those who died from seasickness or disease were thrown overboard to the trailing sharks.”¹²

From 1788— 1792 the evidence was collected, sifted through, summarized and presented before the House. Initially the impact of the testimony was so great that the Abolitionists felt it would not be difficult for them speedily to achieve their goal of complete abolition of the Slave Trade. Who could gainsay, let alone defend the gruesome and shameful evidence? Sir Charles Middleton wrote in January 1788:

“When these articles are properly authenticated before the House I have little doubt of carrying absolute abolition in the House of Commons and such restrictions in the House of Lords as will amount to the same thing. Lord H. himself under such evidence will be ashamed to countenance the trade.”¹³

But in fact Samuel Wilberforce goes on to reflect in his biography of WW published three years after his death, that in spite of the positive reception of his father’s first speech:

“The first burst of generous indignation promised nothing less than the instant abolition of the trade: but mercantile jealousy had taken the alarm, and the defenders of the West Indian system soon found themselves strengthened by the independent alliance of commercial men.”¹⁴

And then the ‘hurricane of terror’ in the wake of the French Revolution and the slave uprisings in Dominica, St Dominique and Martinique that followed in its wake, provoked a backlash for the abolitionists who were held to be in part to blame for the uprisings. It would be 19 years before in March of 1807 the bills that had finally made their way through both Houses of Parliament received the royal assent. Back in 1791 a certain Dr Peckard wrote to Wilberforce almost prophetically :

“You, sir, will stand in the British parliament...with the whole force of truth, with every rational argument, and with all the powers of moving eloquence upon your side, and all to no purpose.”

¹¹ Furneaux: William Wilberforce p.274.

¹² David J. Vaughan. Statesman and Saint - principled politics of Wilberforce Nashville, Tenn. 2002 p. 66

¹³ Robert & Samuel Wilberforce, Life of W. Wilberforce Philadelphia 1839 p.97

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.97

In April of that same year Wilberforce in the course of a four hour speech before the Commons declared:

“Never, never will we desist till we have wiped away this scandal from the Christian name, released ourselves from the load of guilt under which we at present labour, and extinguish every trace of this bloody traffic, of which our posterity, looking back to the history of these enlightened times, will scarce believe that it has been suffered to exist so long a disgrace and dishonour to this country.”¹⁵

The following year he detailed further horrors and became specific about the mortality on the Middle Passage:

“In the year 1788 in a ship in this trade 650 persons were on board, out of whom 155 died. In another 405 were on board, out of whom were lost 200. In another there were on board 402, out of whom 73 died. When Captain Wilson was asked the causes of the mortality, he replied that the slaves had a fixed melancholy and defection; that they wished to die; that they refused sustenance, till they were beaten in order to compel them to eat; and that when they had been so beaten, they looked in the faces of the whites, and said piteously, “Soon we shall be no more.”¹⁶

But the battle for abolition was going to be long and tough. On his deathbed John Wesley had written to Wilberforce predicting this but wishing him perseverance:

Feb 24 1791 “My dear Sir, Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius contra mundum, I see not how you can go through this glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villany which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but if God be for you who can be against you. Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh be not weary of well doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of his might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it. That he who has guided you from your youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things is the prayer of, Dear Sir, Your affectionate servant, John Wesley.¹⁷

Such perseverance was indeed needed. “The pathway to abolition was fraught with difficulty. Vested interest, parliamentary filibustering, entrenched bigotry, international politics, slave unrest, personal sickness and political fear— all combined to frustrate the movement.”¹⁸

Vaughan describes the eventual success thus:

“On February 23 1807 abolition was secured by a vote of 287 to 16. And as the attorney general, Sir Samuel Romilly, stood and praised the perseverance of Wilberforce, the House rose to its feet and broke out in cheers. Wilberforce was so overcome with emotion that he sat head in hand, tears streaming down his face.”

to continue the quote from Vaughan:

“Astonishingly, Wilberforce did not rest satisfied with his victory; for although the trade was now legally abolished, there were still men in chains. So he again took up the cause of the slaves, and again had to exercise an almost supernatural perseverance as he now pushed for the total abolition of slavery. In spite of personal criticism, threats on his life, and deep-seated prejudice on the part of many colleagues, Wilberforce labored for an additional twenty-six years until, on July 26, 1833, the Emancipation Bill passed through Parliament. Three days later Wilberforce died.”¹⁹

and finally:

Wilberforce’s most obvious legacy is the contribution he made to human liberty. At midnight on July 31, 1834, just one year after his death, eight hundred thousand slaves in the British dominions were set free. This was “more than a great event in African or British history. It was one of the greatest events in the history of mankind.”²⁰

WITNESS & TESTIMONY

¹⁵ Stephen, James Essays in Ecclesiastical biography.. London 1850 p.222

¹⁶ Vaughan p.77 quoted from from Os.Guinness, ed. Character counts: leadership qualities in Washington, Wilberforce, Lincoln and Solzhenitsyn. Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Book, 1999 p.74 — 75

¹⁷ Robert & Samuel Wilberforce Life of W.Wilberforce p.99

¹⁸ Vaughan p. 286 quoting Christopher Hancock . Quote comes from “ The Shrimp who stopped slavery” Christian History 53 : 17

¹⁹ ibid p.289

²⁰ ibid. p.300

As was mentioned above Wilberforce devoted immense time to the study of what was actually going on in the slave trade. Several months of preparation and study went into the preparation of his first speech devoted to Abolition. Then, when the House had passed a motion to set up its own committee to hear evidence, he and Thomas Babington for nearly two months “spent nine or more hours a day poring over the 1400 pages of evidence that had already been presented to the house.” The actual nature of slavery and the slave trade provided the strongest argument for its inhumanity and the need for its immediate abolition. The words that he had used in his first speech help focus our minds on this aspect of the matter:

“Sir, the nature and all the circumstance of this Trade are now laid open to us. We can no longer plead ignorance. We cannot evade it. We may spurn it. We may kick it out of the way. But we cannot turn aside so as to avoid seeing it. For it is brought now so directly before our eyes that this house must decide and must justify to all the world and to its own conscience, the rectitude of the ground of its decision...Let not Parliament be the only body that is insensitive to the principles of natural justice.”²¹

It is this principle, of bringing vividly before the legislators the full facts about the slave trade, that we could imitate with greater zeal and efficiency in our fight for the legal protection of the unborn. And to this end I will now provide selected samples of such testimony.

The first witness that we are going to call to the stand is Dr Bernard Nathanson. His testimony is particularly valuable. As a result of his concern in the 1950s that in the U.S. only women with money were able to acquire a termination of their pregnancy he set himself the goal of making abortion available to all. To do this he became a founder member of NARAL (The National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws). Having been successful in their attempts to make abortion legal in many states, and particularly in his own home state, New York, he became the first director of an abortion clinic on Manhattan that was soon doing some 120 abortions a day. The following quotations come from the transcript of a talk that he gave in St Louis, on March 2 2000.

“Now the central question, you see, was this. Was that individual at four or six or eight weeks, ten weeks, twelve weeks, in the mother’s womb, a person, a human being, someone we had to respect and protect or not? Was it just a piece of meat as the pro-abortion people, including myself at that time, said. That was the central, ethical, and still *is* the central ethical and moral question. Because if it was just a piece of meat with no soul and no recognizable human features, and no status in the moral community, then you could rip it out of the mother and toss it in the waste basket and that was all. If, on the other hand, it was a person, although admittedly a very small one, and if it had moral status, and if we were directed or obligated to respect it, then every abortion was the killing of an innocent human being. And that was the central moral dilemma — and still is— of the whole question of abortion. Was what we were doing in short murder, or homicide of some sort, or was it merely a procedure like any other medical procedure, designed to get rid of excess flesh or some kind of tumor growing in the mother. Well... it certainly was more than just a tumor growing in the mother. I remember that about every six months we would have a cocktail party of the doctors and nurses and wives of the doctors. As the director I would be pushed into a corner by a number of wives and they would say to me “*Why* is it that my husband is having nightmares and drinking too much, and screaming about blood in his sleep and taking drugs and using tranquilizers and all the rest of it? And *why* is it that no doctor stays at the clinic longer than a year or two, and *why* is it that the nurses quit in large numbers after a year or two if all you’re doing is just a simple operation to rid a woman of unnecessary flesh or meat? Why is it all so disturbing to all of these doctors and nurses?” At that point I had no answer. We kept coming up against these questions over and over again. The only way we could deal with it, running a clinic of this magnitude, was to deny that there was a person in there, deny that it had a soul, deny in fact that it was anything but a piece of meat. We had to keep denying it to ourselves because to admit otherwise was automatically to condemn ourselves, as murderers, as homicidal maniacs as mass killers. And this went on for the two years that I was there doing 60,00 abortions.”

²¹ Vaughan p.71 quoting Seeley Evangelical Fathers p.207

When Dr Nathanson left the abortion clinic after two years he joined the staff at St Luke's hospital of Columbia University. There he began to examine the unborn child with the new technology of ultrasound to help him. To return to his own words:

".....ultrasound . This is the beaming of very high frequency sound waves— you can't hear them. Not even a dog can hear them. These are beamed through the mother's abdomen and they would strike the beating heart and other organs of the unborn baby and send back echoes which would be collected by what is called a sensor and then transmitted to a computer which would assemble the echoes into a picture of the living unborn baby and show us what the unborn baby was doing at any given moment. It was, in short, a window into the womb. We knew, as an article of faith, that there was an unborn baby in a pregnant woman's womb but we'd never seen it, we'd never studied it, we had no data on it and as a result it was easy to deny that this was a person. But now we had technologies which showed us on a screen right in front of us what that baby looked like. How it sucked its thumb, how it urinated, how it swallowed, how it slept, how it was dreaming, how many times a minute it would move. How it would move. It showed us its breathing movements...everything. Suddenly we began to accumulate data, scientific data, about this unborn baby. Measurements were made, observations. Tests were done."

"So...as material accumulated, data piled up, tests began to show that this person, this blob of cells, this creature in the womb, was a human being in another form, just as *you* once were infants. If any of you look at your infant pictures when you were 3 months or 4 months old you'd say: "That was *me* ? It doesn't *look* like me." So you were also at one point, each one of you, a collection of cells, unrecognizable as a human being in the mother's womb but, whether you looked like a human being or not you *were* a human being and a person growing, and organizing yourself and ordering yourself into what we now see before us as each other, maturing human beings."

"It took me years of research and investigation but by 1975, after three or four years of doing this work, working with the unborn baby and learning about what I'm telling you, I began to understand that that person, that occupant of the womb in the first nine months, *is* a human being and could not be destroyed any more. I could no longer continue to do abortions, nor could I allow everyone else to continue, all the other doctors, to do abortions. So, through this accumulation of scientific data, I became PRO-LIFE, against abortion, anti-abortion. Most people come at it the other way, most people come at it by being religious and then becoming PRO-LIFE. I came at it the other way. Any way that's not important. What is important is that I became PRO-LIFE and ANTI-ABORTION and became very volatile about it, very vociferous."

"In 1984, because I have a searching and curious mind, I began to actually wonder what happens to this unborn baby during an abortion. Does it *feel* anything? Is it in pain? Does it protest? Is it aware at 11 weeks of development that something is going on that is going to kill it during the abortion procedure? So I persuaded a friend of mine who did abortions on the weekend to put an ultrasound machine on the abdomen of every woman he did an abortion on and run a video tape showing what was happening to the fetus during the ultrasound. And as it turned out, reviewing our tapes at the end of the weekend, we discovered that the fetus sensed that something was wrong, that there was an attack on it in the mother's womb because it began to pull away from the aborting instruments and in one case opened its mouth as if in a silent scream and we made a film about that, around that ultrasound tape, called THE SILENT SCREAM,"²²

In his book 'The Hand of God' Dr Nathanson refers to the doctor who had done the ultrasound videotapes of the abortions that he was performing that weekend and he notes:

"...when he looked at the tapes with me in an editing studio, he was so affected that he never did another abortion. I, though I had not done an abortion in five years, was shaken to the very roots of my soul by what I saw."²³

The testimony of Dr Nathanson who came to his Pro-Life position, as he himself states, by way of his research as a scientist via technology, rather than by way of his religious faith, is, perhaps, of particular value in this age of 'measurement'.

The next witness that we would like to call is Dr Jérôme Lejeune. (1927-1994) Dr Lejeune was

²² Extracts from transcript of talk at St Louis Priory School March 2 2000

²³ Hand of God Bernard N.Nathanson Regnery Publishing Inc.Washington,D.C. 1996 p.141

professor of fundamental genetics at a hospital for sick children in Paris. He received many awards for his work on human chromosomal diseases including the Kennedy Award and the William Allan Memorial award. In an article about the early stages of human life he writes: “Life has a very long history, but each individual has a very neat beginning—the moment of its conception. ...What is bewildering is the minuteness of the scripture. It is hard to believe, although beyond any possible doubt, that the entire genetic information necessary and sufficient to build our body and even our brain—the most powerful of problem-solving devices, even able to analyze the laws of the universe— could be epitomized so that its material substratum could fit neatly on the point of a needle.”

“..At two months of age, in utero, the human being is less than one thumb’s length from the head to the rump. He would fit easily into a nutshell, but everything is there: hands, feet, head, organs, brain, all are in place. His heart has been beating for a month already. Looking closely, one would see the palm creases. With a good magnifier the finger prints could be detected. Every document is available for a national identity card.”

“..To accept the fact that after fertilization has taken place, a new human has come into being, is no longer a matter of taste or of opinion. The human nature of the human being from conception to old age is not a metaphysical contention, it is plain experimental evidence.”²⁴

Our next witness is Bishop David Ricken, the Roman Catholic bishop of Cheyenne, Wyoming. In his “Letter to Catholic Politicians and Public Officials on the Subject of Abortion and the Law” of August 2004, Bishop Ricken articulates a strong and challenging critique of the legal basis of the Roe v Wade decision.

“The constitutional question in Roe v Wade has never been examined, and the issue of the unborn has never been studied as a constitutional question. It entered into the legal arena as a matter of personal freedom, the freedom of a woman to destroy the child in her womb. Yet it was precisely the fate of the child in her womb that was the object and focus of every abortion law of history from Hippocrates to English common law. In fact, enshrined by Blackstone at the heart and hub of the question is the clear and concise principle laid down in his Commentaries: “*Qui in utero est pro jam nato habetur, quoties de eius commodo quaeritur*. [One in the womb is held as already born, whenever a question arises for its benefit.] The change of focus in Roe v Wade indicates a seismic change in American jurisprudence comparable in its legal impact to the Dred Scott decision a century before and the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798.”

Bishop Ricken goes on to clarify the role of law in the protection of the weaker members of society and focuses in on an aspect of the Roe v Wade decision:

“The legal argument accepted in the Roe v Wade decision was in articles published in the New York Law Forum by Cyril Means, a lawyer for the National Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Law. Professor Means argued falsely that the sole reason for the abortion laws of the past was to protect a woman from dangerous and unsafe surgery. Under consideration was the surgical procedure itself as safe or unsafe to the health of a woman, with the conclusion that with the advance of medical science and the improvement of surgical techniques all danger to a woman’s health had been removed. Using a well-known principle of common law, ‘*cessante razione legis, cessat et ipsa lex*’ [when the reason for a law no longer exists, the law itself ceases to exist], he argued that abortion laws had become obsolete, and the majority opinion of the court accepted his reasoning. What the arguments of Professor Means failed to point out was the real intent of the abortion laws of the past. They were fashioned not only to protect a woman from unsafe and life-threatening surgery, although this was certainly a major concern, but primarily to protect the life of the unborn from being destroyed. And that was because those laws recognized the unborn child not merely as a potential human being but as an actual human being.”

Having made very clear the point about the role of abortion laws, Bishop Ricken goes on to invite the politicians to become more familiar with the details of the medical procedures involved in different forms of abortion. In this vein he mimics Wilberforce’s determination to look at the facts straight in the eye:

“What is needed in this legal battle for the rights of the unborn is, first of all, a detailed and graphic account of the medical and surgical methods used in terminating unborn life, supported by the latest research in genetics, embryology, gynecology, and related sciences: anatomy, biochemistry, cytology, obstetrics, radiology, uterography

²⁴ A Very Neat Beginning. Jérôme Lejeune. Social Science and Modern Society

Rutgers, The State University New Brunswick. N.J. 08903 May/June 1982

and amniology. The work of these areas is extensive at centers such as the Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine, and at biogenetic centers at several leading universities. The sciences are growing in number, and it is not untrue to say that there are at least 200 individual sciences that could be consulted on exactly what happens when an abortion is performed. It is not enough legally to abhor the destruction of unborn life. The scientific details of that destruction must support the allegation that it is unlawful.”

A third point that the Bishop makes that is of extreme importance relates to the ‘right of dominion’.

“In the case of the unborn we are faced with the question of divided dominion, something unique in human life and unique in constitutional law. It is the definition and application of this concept of divided dominion that will bring about a further application of the right of dominion, recognizing that while in law a woman does have absolute dominion over her own body she does not have absolute dominion over the body of her unborn child. In the case of the unborn, there is a double dominion unique in human life and unique in American law because of the very nature of embryonic life.”

Nor has this seeking of rights protected by law for the unborn have its origin in any particular religion:

“What is in question in this whole debate is not a religious doctrine or some religious argument based on church tradition; it is the rights of an identifiable human subject, a developing human person with its own unique genetic code, possessing the right to exclusive dominion over its own person. The “argument” is not based on church tradition but on a basic principle of law: that government does not give “rights” and that law does not create rights. The purpose and function of law since the rise of constitutional government is to recognize and safeguard rights by appropriate legislation, and the failure to do so is a matter of law, not of religion, and those who pretend otherwise are using the law for some private or personal advantage.”

“The securing of rights for the unborn is the next step in the advancement of human civilization and human rights, an advancement furthering no particular religious tradition but an advancement towards a more just and humane society.”

Finally Bishop Ricken reflects, in words that echo the language that we saw Wilberforce using in his eloquent impassioned plea for the abolition of slavery, that abortion will one day be seen as *the* most important human rights issue of our time:

“A dispassionate analysis of the phenomenon of legalized abortion may in retrospect show it to be the greatest human rights issue of our times. Although this generation may be inured to the grim reality of abortion, it seems likely that once civilization has come to its senses, future generations will look back on our time as the most barbarous in history, not merely for our wars and terrorism, but especially for the antiseptic extermination of the most defenseless members of our society, the poorest of the poor, the most helpless of the helpless, simply because they have no voice.”²⁵

The witness that Bishop Ricken gave included a plea for politicians to examine more closely the nature of the medical procedures currently widely used for terminating pregnancies. Over the last five years, both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, considerable concern has been shown, and research done, on the question of the pain that the unborn do, or do not, experience during the abortion procedure. In our wellness-conscious culture no one, not even a dentist, wishes to inflict even a modicum of unnecessary pain on the patient. So pain brings to focus for everyone the person of the unborn child. I would like to call to the stand on this matter

²⁵ Origins September 2 2004 Vol.34:No.12 pp.193-8

two witnesses one a Doctor who specializes in children and particularly the study of their pain, at the very earliest stages of their development; and one a Congressman from New Jersey.

Dr. K. Anand who is Director of the Pain Neurobiology Laboratory at Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute summarized as follows his opinion on the pain involved for the child in the procedure known as Partial Birth Abortion:

It is my opinion that the human fetus possesses the ability to experience pain from 20 weeks of gestation, if not earlier, and the pain perceived by a fetus is possibly more intense than that perceived by term newborns or older children. The process of (a) grasping the lower extremity of the fetus with a forceps or other surgical instrument, (b) manipulating or rotating the fetal position within the uterus, (c) forcible extraction of the fetal legs and lower body through the uterine cervix, (d) surgical incision of the fetal cranium/upper neck area of the fetus, and (e) entrance into the cranial vault (followed by vacuum suctioning of the fetal brain) during an abortion procedure will result in prolonged and intense pain experienced by the human fetus, if that fetus is at or beyond the neurological maturity associated with 20 weeks of gestation. Anesthetic agents that are routinely administered to the mother during this procedure would be insufficient to ensure that the fetus does not feel pain, and higher doses of anesthetic drugs, enough to produce fetal anesthesia, would seriously compromise the health of the mother. Thus, it is my opinion that the fetus would be subjected to intense pain, occurring prior to fetal demise, from the abortion procedures described in the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003.²⁶

Congressman Chris Smith, the Congressman from New Jersey, as part of his introduction to the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act (H.R.4420). said on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives on May 20 2004

"I happen to agree with the ACLU's contention that the method of abortion called Dilation and Evacuation causes incredible pain, maybe even more pain than a Partial-Birth Abortion. The Dilation and Evacuation method, which is used in most second trimester abortions, involves the abortionist grasping the unborn child's body parts at random with a long-toothed clamp. The fetal body parts are then torn off of the body and pulled out of the mother. The remaining body parts are grasped and pulled out, one by one, until only the head remains. The head is then grasped and crushed in order to finally remove it from the mother. It takes 30 minutes from beginning to end."

He concluded his presentation with courageous testimony. Once again, looking through the new eyes that technology has given us, he unflinchingly described what he saw:

It is time that we opened our eyes to the terrible pain that unborn children feel every day during abortions performed in our cities and towns. Right down the street babies are being ripped limb from limb in a way that would create an outcry if they did it to a cat, dog or pig. Let's stop the denial and recognize the truth — abortion is excruciatingly painful to unborn children.²⁷

And who better to bring this section of testimony to a close than Blessed Teresa of Calcutta In 1979 Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. As usual she prepared herself for her speech in prayer and used no text. The speech was transcribed from the recording made of her address. These are words from the transcript that was made available by the Nobel Committee:

"But I feel the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a direct war, a direct killing - direct murder by the mother herself. And we read in the Scripture, for God says very clearly: Even if a mother could forget her child - I will not forget you - I have carved you in the palm of my hand. We are carved in the palm of His hand, so close to Him that unborn child has been carved in the hand of God. And that is what strikes me most, the

²⁶ Quotation from expert report of Kanwaljeets Anand, M.B.B.S., D.Phil Jan. 15 2004

²⁷ Text of remarks made by Congressman Chris Smith (R.N.J.) May 20 2004

beginning of that sentence, that even if a mother could forget, something impossible - but even if she could forget - I will not forget you. And today the greatest means - the greatest destroyer of peace is abortion. And we who are standing here - our parents wanted us. We would not be here if our parents would do that to us. Our children, we want them, we love them, but what of the millions. Many people are very, very concerned with the children in India, with the children in Africa where quite a number die, maybe of malnutrition, of hunger and so on, but millions are dying deliberately by the will of the mother. And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today. Because if a mother can kill her own child - what is left for me to kill you and you kill me - there is nothing between."²⁸

ELOQUENCE

In our world of speech writers and sound-bites we are not habituated to the persuasiveness of eloquence, of listening to speeches that are three and a half hours or four hours in length. Born in 1938 in England I grew up hearing *about* the great speeches of Winston Churchill that ‘kept England going’ during the darkest hours of World War II. I was too young to hear them or understand them ‘live’. The great orator Edmund Burke said of William Wilberforce’s first speech in May 1789 on abolition:

“The House, the nation, and Europe are under great and serious obligations to the honorable gentleman for having brought forward the subject in a manner the most masterly, impressive and eloquent. The principles were so well laid down, and supported with so much force and order, that it equalled anything I have ever heard in modern times, and is not perhaps to be surpassed in the remains of Grecian eloquence.”²⁹

There is a limit to what the gruesome ‘facts’ of abortion, even the testimony from experts about the pain of the unborn child during an abortion, can do to persuade us. We easily suffer from ‘overload’ when it comes to horrific scenes of violence or suffering. One man in our day has opened up a new area for persuasiveness. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn back in 1970, some twenty years before the collapse of the communist regime, wrote of the power of beauty to ‘save the world’ when he composed his address on the occasion of his being awarded the Nobel prize for literature in that year. Ironically he was not permitted to leave Russia to give the address himself but the text was later published.

In it he claims that it is the artist—whether in words, in paint, in music or whatever medium—who is entrusted with the persuasive conveying of Truth.

Three quotes from Solzhenitsyn’s speech will suffice for his witness :

First, what makes ‘art’ different from ‘propaganda constraint or scientific proof’?

“From man to man, as he completes his brief spell on earth, art transfers the whole weight of the unfamiliar, lifelong experiences with all its burdens, its colors, its sap of life; it recreates in the flesh an unknown experience and allows us to possess it as our own.”³⁰

But how did this ‘art’, this ‘beauty’ as Dostoevsky put it, come to ‘save the world’?
Solzhenitsyn suggests:

²⁸ Nobel Lectures, Peace 1971-1980 World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1997

²⁹ Vaughan p.263

³⁰ Extracts from unabridged official english version of the Nobel Foundation published in The Tablet 9 September 1972 London England p.869

“..a work of art bears within itself its own verification: concepts which are devised or stretched do not stand being portrayed in images, they all come crashing down, appear sickly and pale, convince no one. But those works of art which have scooped up the truth and presented it to us as a living force— they take hold of us, compel us, and nobody ever, not even in ages to come, will appear to refute them”(p.867. col3)

Perhaps he had in mind the fundamental lie of the communist system: the state is everything, the individual nothing. This is what he had experienced in the Gulag in Siberia. This is what he wrote about in his novels. He had experienced in his own flesh the violence that had been used to attempt to ‘control’ the truth. He had heard the falsehoods and he had seen the propaganda. In the final part of his Nobel Address he puts it all together:

“Violence finds its only refuge in falsehood; falsehood its only support in violence. Any man who has once proclaimed violence as his method must inexorably choose falsehood as his principle. At its birth violence acts openly and then with pride. But no sooner does it become strong and firmly established than it senses the rarefaction of the air around it and it cannot continue to exist without descending into a fog of lies, clothing them in sweet talk.”(p.871 col 2)

“In the struggle with falsehood, art always did win and it always does win! Openly and irrefutably for everyone! Falsehood can hold out against much in this world, but not against art. (ibid)

The falsehood that the unborn child in the womb is merely a piece of meat, a blob of tissue, the ‘product of conception’, is still being propounded across the world by those who propose abortion as the way to solve the ‘evil’ of an unwanted pregnancy. But the ambiguity and linguistic ‘fog’ that shrouds this approach, though challenged by the witnesses quoted above, is probably well captured in the scientific terminology that we can glimpse in the following extract from an article on fetal pain from the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of September 1999. (Vol. 106 pp.881-886.)

It is not possible to measure pain directly in the fetus. Studies of stress responses can be used to give an index of the degree of trauma induced by different interventions, and also the response to analgesia or anaesthesia, but they do not indicate what the fetus actually experiences. The assessment of whether or when the fetus is likely to feel pain has to be based on an evaluation of the available anatomical and physiological evidence. The physical system for nociception is present and functional by 26 weeks and it seems likely that the fetus is capable of feeling pain from this stage.”

The article concludes with this comment:

“The eighteenth century philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, wrote of animals *The question is not Can they reason? nor Can they talk?, but Can they suffer?* This caused a change in attitude towards animals and their treatment that is continuing today, such that in the UK even frogs and fishes are required by Act of Parliament to be protected by anaesthesia from possible suffering due to invasive procedures. Why not human beings?”

At this point in this ‘clinical’ scientific document on the pain of fetuses the word ‘antiseptic’ quoted by Bishop David Ricken in the final paragraph of his “Letter” quoted above jumps to mind. We can talk about a ‘fetus’ or a ‘blob of tissue’ but when we are attributing ‘pain’ to it there is something deep within us that instinctively wants to cry out.. “It’s a ‘human being, a ‘person’, ‘my baby’ who is the subject of this pain!”

Many people will find themselves persuaded of the humanity of the unborn and of our need to give them protection by the testimony of a Dr Nathanson, a Dr Lejeune, or even a Congressman, Christopher Smith. Many, guided by faith will be inspired by a Mother Teresa of Calcutta, or a John Paul II or a Benedict XVI. But many of those, who lead a hectic life and are busy with survival in our technologically bemused culture, will find that it is ‘art’ or ‘beauty’, in Solzhenitsyn’s sense, that eventually persuades them. . It may be a movie like the recently

released 'Bella'— a Pro-Life 'Schindler's List' It may be a life of someone - William Wilberforce's struggle in England to abolish the Slave Trade as told in 'Amazing Grace. It may be a life of someone, like Dr Nathanson or Mother Teresa, boldly and powerfully told. It may be a Solzhenitsyn-quality novel or a poem. However it happens let us hope that, before the Kloning Revolution has endangered our whole human species, we may find it possible, probably through the United Nations, to have the people of the world make a new Declaration of Human Rights that will include our children as yet in the womb. Christians, Jews and Muslims may be able to unite to achieve this, even before it becomes a reality. After all, we remember that at the time of that first Declaration of Human Rights in 1945 there still were areas of the world, in communist dominated countries for example, in which these rights were blatantly disregarded. With the inspiration of William Wilberforce preparing us for 'the long haul' let us work patiently to achieve this. Let us hope that before too long, at the United Nations, so at a *global* level, as fellow citizens of the one world, we may find a way of declaring: that human life is sacred from conception;

that the child in the womb is to be honored, respected and protected;

that motherhood is to be esteemed and women who are pregnant are to be helped, when in need, to bring forth their child and to provide for its health and comfort. Macaulay said that William Wilberforce added to all his virtues and natural gifts

'the abiding eloquence of a Christian life'. May we all, as Christians, as Jews, as Muslims or as men and women of other faiths, succeed in doing likewise.

DELLAPENNA, MEANS & ROE

— the role of a flawed history in a Supreme Court decision

SINCERITY

Sincerity is pre-required
in any search there be
but it is truth that is desired
for only truth sets free.

1. CAN HISTORY DESCRIBE WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED ?

'The task of historians remains to attempt as best they can to report and interpret the past as it was and not as the historians wish it were.'

(Joseph Dellapenna *Dispelling the Myths of Abortion History* p.1036

Justice Harry Blackmun wrote as follows in the Preamble to his 'majority opinion' in *Roe v. Wade*:

“Our task, of course, is to resolve the issue by constitutional measurement, free of emotion and predilection. We seek earnestly to do this, and, because we do, we have inquired into, and in this opinion place some emphasis upon, medical and medical-legal history and what that history reveals about man's attitudes towards the abortion procedure over the centuries.” (Penultimate paragraph of preamble. *Roe v. Wade*.)

The abortion issue, the right of women to abort their children, is a central issue at this time in the human community world wide. In the United States, since the *Roe v Wade* decision was handed down by the Supreme Court on January 22 1973, some 50 million abortions have been recorded. Currently, the annual rate is a little over one million. Given the statement made by Justice Blackmun in the preamble quoted above it is of no small importance to evaluate the reliability of the historical information — the legal medical-history, as the Justice calls it— which according to his explicit statement, was an important element in the decision. Historical fact should guide our present reasoning and judgement, historical fiction should not.

Professor Joseph Dellapenna, in his book *Dispelling the Myths of Abortion History*, has set out to do just this. He rejects the notion that all history is subjective and that there is no way of establishing 'what happened'. In the midst of a culture in which a philosophical relativism is pervasive and where the belief that there is no such thing as objective truth is widespread, he refuses to accept that the search for historical fact is equally futile.

“The cultural contingency of accepted history neither destroys the factual nature of what actually happened in the past nor the historian's obligation to attempt to recapture as much as possible of what actually happened... As historian Carl Friedrich pointed out, “the perplexing paradox of all historical work is that what actually happened can never be recaptured, although historical research would lose its point without belief that more of it can be recaptured than is presently known”

2. THE SUPREME COURT IN ROE RELIED ON A FALSE ACCOUNT OF THE LEGAL HISTORY OF ABORTION

Dellapenna makes the following case:

In *Roe versus Wade*, the Supreme Court in general and Justice Blackmun in particular, relied too heavily on Professor Cyril Means' account of the legal history of abortion both in England and in America. This history was deeply flawed. It was specifically in error in its claim that abortion was a 'common law liberty' both in England and in America until the nineteenth century. And also that the statutes of the nineteenth century that made abortion illegal were directed primarily at protecting the health of women, not the lives of unborn children.

In his meticulously referenced book, Dellapenna demonstrates that both of these claims are false. In the following passage he summarizes what he then demonstrates in detail in the next thirty pages:

“In the seventeenth century we find a woman condemned for self-abortion, as well as noteworthy cases in which a man was convicted of murder when the infant was born alive and subsequently died bearing the signs of the abortion and in which it was held to be murder if the woman died from the abortion even though she had consented to the procedure. Later still, a woman was convicted of aborting another (consenting) woman before the child quickened; the abortionist was sentenced to three years imprisonment after exposure in the stocks. The evidence leaves little room to believe that abortion was a common law liberty contrary to the new orthodoxy of abortion history.”

A little later, on the following page, Dellapenna continues:

“Attempts to abort apparently were becoming more common, and were consistently treated as a serious crime in England and prosecuted as such, although some confusion was introduced regarding the point at which a fetus became a 'person'. In the story of these legal events two men—Sir Edward Coke and Sir Matthew Hale—stand out as lawyers, judges and scholars who shaped the thinking of their societies about these and other legal matters. Given their prominence in the events of their century, they truly were riders in the storm. Under their influence, the common law regarding abortion did change, but abortion was not and did not become legal—as the legal scholars of the following century unanimously attest. And these same legal patterns regarding abortion were replicated in England's American colonies.”

3.PRE-NINETEENTH CENTURY LEGISLATION

In 1732 we have an account of the trial for a misdemeanor of a woman in Derby, England. This is perhaps the first recorded trial of an abortion caused by using an 'intrusive' instrument. The citation is from an account of the trial published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*

“Indicted a second time by the name of Eleanor Beare, for a Misdemeanor, in destroying the foetus in the womb of Grace Belfort by putting an iron instrument up into her Body and thereby causing her to miscarry.”

COUNSEL (FOR THE KING)

Gentlemen, you have heard the Indictment read, and may observe, that the Misdemeanor for which the Prisoner stands indicted, is of a most shocking Nature; to destroy the fruit in the womb carries something in it so contrary to the natural tenderness of the Female Sex, that I am amazed how ever any Woman should arrive at such a degree of Impiety and Cruelty, as to attempt in such a manner as the Prisoner has done, it has really something so shocking in it, that I cannot well display the Nature of the Crime to you, but must leave it to the Evidence. It is cruel and barbarous to the last degree:

Call Grace Belfort.”

After the testimony of the witnesses the account of the trial concludes:
“His Lordship summed up the Evidence in a very moving Speech to the jury, wherein he said, he never met with a Case so 'barbarous and unnatural.' The Jury after a short consultation, brought the Prisoner in Guilty of both Indictments, and she received sentence to stand in the Pillory, the two next Market-Days, and to suffer close imprisonment for Three years.”
Dellapenna comments on the fact that the abortion concerned a child in the pre-quickening stage of the pregnancy: “Eleanor Beare was sentenced to the pillory and to three years in prison for inducing an abortion at less than 14 weeks of gestation, well before quickening was likely.” This occurred during the reign of King George II.

4. NINETEENTH CENTURY LEGISLATION IN NEW YORK STATE

New York State set the legal trend in the nineteenth century and has been most completely studied by historians, so there is more evidence to be examined here than in any other state. It was also in the New York Law School that the late Professor Cyril Means taught and it is the focus of his history. 'Dispelling' therefore uses the developing abortion legislation in this State to show that the protection of fetal life was central in the legislation of 1829, 1845, 1869 and 1872. “..The provision making a woman's solicitation of or performance of an abortion on herself a crime would seem to make it indisputably clear that the 1845 statutory scheme like that of 1829 was designed to protect fetal life. Although one might argue that the crime of self-abortion represented excessive paternalism, a more natural reading suggests an intent to protect the fetus from the mother.”

By the middle of the nineteenth century abortion was growing and becoming more common. Opposition to it was growing too. On February 5th 1867 the Medical Society of New York at Albany. Produced a series of resolutions the preamble of which read: “whereas from the first moment of conception there is a living creature in process of development to full maturity; and whereas any sufficient interruption to this living process always results in the destruction of life; and whereas the intentional arrest of this living process, eventuating in the destruction of life (being an act with intention to kill) is consequently murder; therefore...

There followed several resolutions two of which we cite below:

“Resolved:...That this society do express their abhorrence, and deprecate in a most emphatic manner, the growing increase of that demoralizing and given and practice rendered in procuring criminal or unnecessary abortion.”

“Resolved: That a copy of this preamble and resolutions be transmitted to both branches of the legislature now in session.”

This resulted in the statute of 1869. The following year the Committee of Criminal Abortion of the AMA issued a report that concluded:

“We had to deal with human life. In a matter of less importance we could entertain no

compromise. An honest judge on the bench would call things by their proper names. We could do no less.” The matter was once more revisited by the legislature and the act in 1872 “seemed to reflect even greater concern for fetal life than its predecessor.

A section from the 1872 act will suffice to show the tenor of the statute:

#2 Any woman pregnant with child who shall take any medicine, drug, substance or thing whatever or shall use or employ or suffer any other person to use or employ, or submit to the use or employment of any instrument or other means with the intent thereby to produce the miscarriage of the child of which she is pregnant, unless the same shall have been necessary to preserve her life or that of such child, shall in case the death of such child be thereby produced, be deemed guilty of a felony, and upon conviction shall be punished by imprisonment in the State prison for a term not less than four years or more than ten years.

Dellapenna comments at this point: “After reviewing the foregoing evidence, one again can only marvel at historians who conclude that “the destruction of the fetus never gained the standing either of infanticide or homicide.”

In 1901 Judge Pearson of Maryland reflects on the fact that in “...these days of “advanced” surgery and marvelous medical science and skill, operations are performed and powerful drugs administered by skillful and careful men without danger to the life of the patient.” But he points out that the prosecution of abortionists is first and foremost directed at protecting the life of the unborn child rather than the life of the woman.

“The woman takes her life in her hands when she submits to an abortion, be she wife or maid, but her death is no necessary element in the procuring of an abortion and the application of the harsh rule here contended for would have no effect in the repression of that abhorrent crime, which can only be efficiently dealt with by severity in the enactment and administration of the law punishing the attempt upon the life of the unborn child...

The corpus delicti of the offense of abortion is the destruction of the unborn infant.”

5. SUMMARY

The above quotations must suffice, in this brief glimpse from a very substantial book, to give the reader a sample of Dellapenna's position. This position he trenchantly described in the early pages of the book:

“Justice Harry Blackmun devoted fully half of the majority opinion in ROE to the history of abortion, using that history to inform his interpretation of the 'values' involved in the case and ultimately whether the statutory prohibition of abortion was constitutional;. Blackmun relied heavily and uncritically on Means' history, citing Means (and no other historian) no less than seven times. Like Means' Blackmun's conclusions were wrong on all points.”

Towards the end of his book(p.1084) Dellapenna puts a challenge before the Court in these words:

“It is time that the Court took seriously its own premise that the constitutional status of a claimed right to abort is to be tested against the history and traditions of this nation. The accumulated wisdom relating to abortion teaches us that the prohibition of abortion was always

viewed as the protection of emerging, yet real, human life— a concern only made more certain by the continual growth of medical knowledge of gestation during the last two centuries.”

APPENDIX FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

With this in mind I offer the following reflections

1. Roe states: The appellee and certain amici argue that the fetus is a “person” within the language and meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment. In support of this they outline at length and in detail the well-known facts of fetal development. If this suggestion of personhood is established, the appellant's case, of course, collapses, for the fetus' right to life would then be guaranteed specifically by the Amendment.” Ch IX #A

Have any fresh events helped to establish this 'personhood'?

What are we to say about the child in utero who can now be removed for surgery and then replaced in its mother's womb and carried to term. A famous photograph shows the child's hand reaching out of the womb through the incision and clutching the surgeon's finger. Are we to consider that the fetus was a person during the surgery and then a non-person once it was returned to the womb until it was later born? Such contentions put a strain on reasonableness and border on the absurd.

2. Through ultrasound we can now watch the fetus' life in the womb. We can photograph it. The mother can already see and appreciate her child. Does not this have some bearing on whether the unborn may be regarded by the mother and her physician— or even a passing Supreme Court Justice—as a person?

3. We can now measure the pain that the fetus experiences through the meters that monitor pain. We can estimate the levels of pain at different stages of the child's growth in the womb. Should the law not take cognizance of this fact in its assessment of the legal protection from pain appropriate for this human being growing in the womb of its mother?

The sad fact is that many of those who want to keep abortion legal are not *that* interested in the being and value of the fetus/unbornchild/baby that is in the womb. It has been observed that a mother will refer to the being in her womb as a fetus if she is planning to abort it and as 'my baby' if she is hoping to bring it to birth. The being in the womb, however, does not change— only what happens to it. Is this why pregnant women in an abortion clinic are not allowed to see the inhabitant of their womb on ultrasound, while the physician preparing to do the abortion uses this technology to assess the exact age of the fetus and the exact procedure needed to destroy it? They must not be allowed to see the reality of their child or they might think twice about aborting it. This theory is supported by the fact that statistics from the Pregnancy Resource

Centers show that, of those who stop by on the way to the abortion clinic and use the center's ultrasound to view their baby about 90% change their minds and decide to have their child.

After the horror of the Nazi eugenics program that occurred before and during World War II the World Medical Association adopted the Declaration of Geneva in 1948 setting forth a 'standard' for medical ethics:

It runs: "I will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race, party politics or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient. I will maintain the utmost respect for human life, from the time of conception; even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity" .

It would be great if we could go back to this. Go back to what Doctors, Feminists, Lawyers and Judges were proclaiming with great fervor in the nineteenth century at the moment when the progress in surgery and antisepsis was making abortion an almost safe procedure. In this first decade of the new millennium, when it is estimated that at least 80% of abortions are performed — not after rape, not to save the life of the mother or for any of those other 'crisis' reasons that played so prominent a role in the persuasive arguments of NARAL — but as a back-up to failed contraceptives; it would be good at a time like this, to discover and proclaim *who we are as rational human beings*. Then, conscious of our dignity from conception to natural death, we might at world level— perhaps via another more extensive human rights declaration by the United Nations— set about restoring legal protection for our unborn children.

"Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you."

9 January 2008

THE ELOQUENCE OF AUTHORITY

The Church proposes truth,
imposes nothing.

Pope John Paul II

DONUM VITAE

#5 Guided by God's revelation the Church teaches.

On its part the Magisterium of the Church offers to human reason in this field too the light of Revelation; the doctrine concerning man taught by the Magisterium contains many elements which throw light on the problems being faced here.

From the moment of conception, the life of every human being is to be respected in an absolute way because man is the only creature on earth that God has “wished for himself” and the spiritual soul of each man is “immediately created” by God.(Pius XII *Humani Generis* AAS 42 1955); his whole being bears the image of the Creator. Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves “the creative action of God” and remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can, in any circumstance, claim for himself the right to destroy directly an innocent human being.

Human procreation requires on the part of the spouses responsible collaboration with the fruitful love of God; the gift of human life must be actualized in marriage through the specific and exclusive acts of husband and wife, in accordance with the laws inscribed in their persons and in their union.(*Gaudium et Spes* #51)

(Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Feb 22 1987 Card. Ratzinger Prefect)

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE JOHN PAUL II

#2 The Gospel of Life message fulfils human aspirations beyond our wildest dreams

The Church knows that this Gospel of life, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the heart of every person—believer and non-believer alike—because it marvellously fulfils all the heart's expectations while infinitely surpassing them. Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart (cf. Rom 2:14-15) the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree. Upon the recognition of this right, every human community and the political community itself are founded...

The Church, faithfully contemplating the mystery of the Redemption, acknowledges this value with ever new wonder. She feels called to proclaim to the people of all times this "Gospel", the source of invincible hope and true joy for every period of history. The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel.

#18 In an age when human rights have been proclaimed at a global level, the right to kill the unborn or the elderly is being promoted—a strange contradiction.

In this way, and with tragic consequences, a long historical process is reaching a turning-point. The process which once led to discovering the idea of "human rights"—rights inherent in every person and prior to any Constitution and State legislation—is today marked by a surprising contradiction. Precisely in an age when the inviolable rights of the person are solemnly proclaimed and the value of life is publicly affirmed, the very right to life is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death.

On the one hand, the various declarations of human rights and the many initiatives inspired by these declarations show that at the global level there is a growing moral sensitivity, more alert to acknowledging the value and dignity of every individual as a human being, without any distinction of race, nationality, religion, political opinion or social class.

On the other hand, these noble proclamations are unfortunately contradicted by a tragic repudiation of them in practice. This denial is still more distressing, indeed more scandalous, precisely because it is occurring in a society which makes the affirmation and protection of human rights its primary objective and its boast. How can these repeated affirmations of principle be reconciled with the continual increase and widespread justification of attacks on human life? How can we reconcile these declarations with the refusal to accept those who are weak and needy, or elderly, or those who have just been conceived? These attacks go directly against respect for life and they represent a direct threat to the entire culture of human rights. It is a threat capable, in the end, of jeopardizing the very meaning of democratic coexistence: rather than societies of "people living together", our cities risk becoming societies of people who are

rejected, marginalized, uprooted and oppressed. If we then look at the wider worldwide perspective, how can we fail to think that the very affirmation of the rights of individuals and peoples made in distinguished international assemblies is a merely futile exercise of rhetoric, if we fail to unmask the selfishness of the rich countries which exclude poorer countries from access to development or make such access dependent on arbitrary prohibitions against procreation, setting up an opposition between development and man himself? Should we not question the very economic models often adopted by States which, also as a result of international pressures and forms of conditioning, cause and aggravate situations of injustice and violence in which the life of whole peoples is degraded and trampled upon?

#19 Freedom has to be linked to truth.

If we do not choose what is truly good, our freedom is illusory.

At another level, the roots of the contradiction between the solemn affirmation of human rights and their tragic denial in practice lies in a notion of freedom which exalts the isolated individual in an absolute way, and gives no place to solidarity, to openness to others and service of them.

While it is true that the taking of life not yet born or in its final stages is sometimes marked by a mistaken sense of altruism and human compassion, it cannot be denied that such a culture of death, taken as a whole, betrays a completely individualistic concept of freedom, which ends up by becoming the freedom of "the strong" against the weak who have no choice but to submit.

It is precisely in this sense that Cain's answer to the Lord's question: "Where is Abel your brother?" can be interpreted: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). Yes, every man is his "brother's keeper", because God entrusts us to one another. And it is also in view of this entrusting that God gives everyone freedom, a freedom which possesses an inherently relational dimension. This is a great gift of the Creator, placed as it is at the service of the person and of his fulfilment through the gift of self and openness to others; but when freedom is made absolute in an individualistic way, it is emptied of its original content, and its very meaning and dignity are contradicted.

There is an even more profound aspect which needs to be emphasized: freedom negates and destroys itself, and becomes a factor leading to the destruction of others, when it no longer recognizes and respects its essential link with the truth. When freedom, out of a desire to emancipate itself from all forms of tradition and authority, shuts out even the most obvious evidence of an objective and universal truth, which is the foundation of personal and social life, then the person ends up by no longer taking as the sole and indisputable point of reference for his own choices the truth about good and evil, but only his subjective and changeable opinion or, indeed, his selfish interest and whim.

#20 Creating laws that authorize the killing of the unborn or the elderly marks the death of true freedom.

To claim the right to abortion, infanticide and euthanasia, and to recognize that right in law, means to attribute to human freedom a *perverse and evil significance* that of an *absolute power over others and against others*. This is the death of true freedom. "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin." (Jn 8:34)

#25 The almost divine dignity of every human being

Precisely by contemplating the precious blood of Christ, the sign of his self-giving love (cf. *Jn* 13:1), the believer learns to recognize and appreciate the almost divine dignity of every human being and can exclaim with ever renewed and grateful wonder: "How precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator if he gained so great a Redeemer' (*Exsultet* of the Easter Vigil) and if God 'gave his only Son' in order that man 'should not perish but have eternal life!'" (cf. *Jn* 3.16)

#57

With full authority John Paul II affirms the evil of procured abortion.

The absolute inviolability of innocent human life is declared.

In effect, the absolute inviolability of innocent human life is a moral truth clearly taught by Sacred Scripture, constantly upheld in the Church's Tradition and consistently proposed by her Magisterium. This consistent teaching is the evident result of that "supernatural sense of the faith" which, inspired and sustained by the Holy Spirit, safeguards the People of God from error when "it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals".

Faced with the progressive weakening in individual consciences and in society of the sense of the absolute and grave moral illicitness of the direct taking of all innocent human life, especially at its beginning and at its end, the Church's Magisterium has spoken out with increasing frequency in defence of the sacredness and inviolability of human life. The Papal Magisterium, particularly insistent in this regard, has always been seconded by that of the Bishops, with numerous and comprehensive doctrinal and pastoral documents issued either by Episcopal Conferences or by individual Bishops. The Second Vatican Council also addressed the matter forcefully, in a brief but incisive passage.

Therefore, by 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 (cf. Rom 2:14-15), is reaffirmed by Sacred Scripture, transmitted by the Tradition of the Church and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

The deliberate decision to deprive an innocent human being of his life is always morally evil and can never be licit either as an end in itself or as a means to a good end. It is in fact a grave act of disobedience to the moral law, and indeed to God himself, the author and guarantor of that law; it contradicts the fundamental virtues of justice and charity. "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".

As far as the right to life is concerned, every innocent human being is absolutely equal to all others. This equality is the basis of all authentic social relationships which, to be truly such, can only be founded on truth and justice, recognizing and protecting every man and woman as a person and not as an object to be used. Before the moral norm which prohibits the direct taking of the life of an innocent human being "there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone. It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the 'poorest of the poor' on the face of the earth. Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal".

#61 At every moment of its existence life is sacred and inviolable.

Human life is sacred and inviolable at every moment of existence, including the initial phase which precedes birth. All human beings, from their mothers' womb, belong to God who searches them and knows them, who forms them and knits them together with his own hands, who gazes on them when they are tiny shapeless embryos and already sees in them the adults of tomorrow whose days are numbered and whose vocation is even now written in the "book of life" (cf. Ps 139: 1, 13-16). There too, when they are still in their mothers' womb—as many passages of the Bible bear witness—they are the personal objects of God's loving and fatherly providence.

#63. Embryonic life is sacred, too.

This evaluation of the morality of abortion is to be applied also to the recent forms of intervention on human embryos which, although carried out for purposes legitimate in themselves, inevitably involve the killing of those embryos. This is the case with experimentation on embryos, which is becoming increasingly widespread in the field of biomedical research and is legally permitted in some countries. Although "one must uphold as licit procedures carried out on the human embryo which respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but rather are directed to its healing, the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival", it must nonetheless be stated that the use of human embryos or fetuses as an object of experimentation constitutes a crime against their dignity as human beings who have a right to the same respect owed to a child once born, just as to every person.

This moral condemnation also regards procedures that exploit living human embryos and fetuses—sometimes specifically "produced" for this purpose by in vitro fertilization—either to be used as "biological material" or as providers of organs or tissue for transplants in the treatment of certain diseases. The killing of innocent human creatures, even if carried out to help others, constitutes an absolutely unacceptable act.

Special attention must be given to evaluating the morality of prenatal diagnostic techniques which enable the early detection of possible anomalies in the unborn child. In view of the complexity of these techniques, an accurate and systematic moral judgment is necessary. When they do not involve disproportionate risks for the child and the mother, and are meant to make possible early

therapy or even to favour a serene and informed acceptance of the child not yet born, these techniques are morally licit. But since the possibilities of prenatal therapy are today still limited, it not infrequently happens that these techniques are used with a eugenic intention which accepts selective abortion in order to prevent the birth of children affected by various types of anomalies. Such an attitude is shameful and utterly reprehensible, since it presumes to measure the value of a human life only within the parameters of "normality" and physical well-being, thus opening the way to legitimizing infanticide and euthanasia as well.

And yet the courage and the serenity with which so many of our brothers and sisters suffering from serious disabilities lead their lives when they are shown acceptance and love bears eloquent witness to what gives authentic value to life, and makes it, even in difficult conditions, something precious for them and for others. The Church is close to those married couples who, with great anguish and suffering, willingly accept gravely handicapped children. She is also grateful to all those families which, through adoption, welcome children abandoned by their parents because of disabilities or illnesses.

#80 . St John's letter— testimony about proclaiming the Word of Life. This is our joy.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life ... we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us" (1 Jn 1:1, 3). Jesus is the only Gospel: we have nothing further to say or any other witness to bear.

To proclaim Jesus is itself to proclaim life. For Jesus is "the word of life" (1 Jn 1:1). In him "life was made manifest" (1 Jn 1:2); he himself is "the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us" (1 Jn 1:2). By the gift of the Spirit, this same life has been bestowed on us. It is in being destined to life in its fullness, to "eternal life", that every person's earthly life acquires its full meaning.

Enlightened by this Gospel of life, we feel a need to proclaim it and to bear witness to it in all its marvellous newness. Since it is one with Jesus himself, who makes all things new and conquers the "oldness" which comes from sin and leads to death, this Gospel exceeds every human expectation and reveals the sublime heights to which the dignity of the human person is raised through grace. This is how Saint Gregory of Nyssa understands it: "Man, as a being, is of no account; he is dust, grass, vanity. But once he is adopted by the God of the universe as a son, he becomes part of the family of that Being, whose excellence and greatness no one can see, hear or understand. What words, thoughts or flight of the spirit can praise the superabundance of this grace? Man surpasses his nature: mortal, he becomes immortal; perishable, he becomes imperishable; fleeting, he becomes eternal; human, he becomes divine".

Gratitude and joy at the incomparable dignity of man impel us to share this message with everyone: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have

fellowship with us" (1 Jn 1:3). We need to bring the Gospel of life to the heart of every man and woman and to make it penetrate every part of society

#89. Agencies— their responsibility always to respect the sacredness of human life.

Agencies and centres of service to life, and all other initiatives of support and solidarity which circumstances may from time to time suggest, need to be directed by people who are generous in their involvement and fully aware of the importance of the Gospel of life for the good of individuals and society.

A unique responsibility belongs to health-care personnel: doctors, pharmacists, nurses, chaplains, men and women religious, administrators and volunteers. Their profession calls for them to be guardians and servants of human life. In today's cultural and social context, in which science and the practice of medicine risk losing sight of their inherent ethical dimension, health-care professionals can be strongly tempted at times to become manipulators of life, or even agents of death. In the face of this temptation their responsibility today is greatly increased. Its deepest inspiration and strongest support lie in the intrinsic and undeniable ethical dimension of the health-care profession, something already recognized by the ancient and still relevant Hippocratic Oath, which requires every doctor to commit himself to absolute respect for human life and its sacredness.

Absolute respect for every innocent human life also requires the exercise of conscientious objection in relation to procured abortion and euthanasia. "Causing death" can never be considered a form of medical treatment, even when the intention is solely to comply with the patient's request. Rather, it runs completely counter to the health-care profession, which is meant to be an impassioned and unflinching affirmation of life. Bio-medical research too, a field which promises great benefits for humanity, must always reject experimentation, research or applications which disregard the inviolable dignity of the human being, and thus cease to be at the service of people and become instead means which, under the guise of helping people, actually harm them.

#96. The importance of conscience formation with regard to the inviolable worth of every human life.

The first and fundamental step towards this cultural transformation consists in forming consciences with regard to the incomparable and inviolable worth of every human life. It is of the greatest importance to re-establish the essential connection between life and freedom. These are inseparable goods: where one is violated, the other also ends up being violated. There is no true freedom where life is not welcomed and loved; and there is no fullness of life except in freedom. Both realities have something inherent and specific which links them inextricably: the vocation to love. Love, as a sincere gift of self, is what gives the life and freedom of the person their truest meaning.

No less critical in the formation of conscience is the recovery of the necessary link between freedom and truth. As I have frequently stated, when freedom is detached from objective truth it becomes impossible to establish personal rights on a firm rational basis; and the ground is laid for society to be at the mercy of the unrestrained will of individuals or the oppressive totalitarianism of public authority.

It is therefore essential that man should acknowledge his inherent condition as a creature to whom God has granted being and life as a gift and a duty. Only by admitting his innate dependence can man live and use his freedom to the full, and at the same time respect the life and freedom of every other person. Here especially one sees that "at the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God". Where God is denied and people live as though he did not exist, or his commandments are not taken into account, the dignity of the human person and the inviolability of human life also end up being rejected or compromised.

**BENEDICT XVI LATERAN UNIVERSITY, ROME
MAY 10 2008 CELEBRATION OF HUMANAE VITAE 40TH ANNIVERSARY**

Pope Benedict draws attention to the profound truth of *Humanae Vitae*. Love and Reason work together. The human person is a *whole*. Fertility is part of that whole and is not to be treated as separate from the person in the mutual gift of the spouses to each other. They give all of themselves, as the Creator intended, in the conjugal act.

The Magisterium of the Church cannot be exonerated from reflecting in an ever new and deeper way on the fundamental principles that concern marriage and procreation. What was true yesterday is true also today. The truth expressed in *Humanae Vitae* does not change; on the contrary, precisely in the light of the new scientific discoveries, its teaching becomes more timely and elicits reflection on the intrinsic value it possesses. The key word to enter coherently into its content remains "love". As I wrote in my first Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*: "Man is truly himself when his body and soul are intimately united.... Yet it is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is man, the person, a unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves" (n. 5). If this unity is removed, the value of the person is lost and there is a serious risk of considering the body a commodity that can be bought or sold (cf. *ibid*). In a culture subjected to the prevalence of "having" over "being", human life risks losing its value. If the practice of sexuality becomes a drug that seeks to enslave one's partner to one's own desires and interests, without respecting the cycle of the beloved, then what must be defended is no longer solely the true concept of love but in the first place the dignity of the person. As believers, we could never let the domination of technology invalidate the quality of love and the sacredness of life.

It was not by chance that Jesus, in speaking of human love, alluded to what God created at the beginning of the Creation (cf. Mt 19: 4-6). His teaching refers to a free act with which the Creator not only meant to express the riches of his love which is open, giving itself to all, but he also wanted to impress upon it a paradigm in accordance with which humanity's action must be declined. In the fruitfulness of conjugal love, the man and the woman share in the Father's creative act and make it clear that at the origin of their spousal life they pronounce a genuine "yes" which is truly lived in reciprocity, remaining ever open to life. This word of the Lord with its profound truth endures unchanged and cannot be abolished by the different theories that have succeeded one another in the course of the years, and at times even been contradictory. Natural law, which is at the root of the recognition of true equality between persons and peoples, deserves to be recognized as the source that inspires the relationship between the spouses in their responsibility for begetting new children. The transmission of life is inscribed in nature and its laws stand as an unwritten norm to which all must refer. Any attempt to turn one's gaze away from this principle is in itself barren and does not produce a future.

We urgently need to rediscover a new covenant that has always been fruitful when it has been respected; it puts reason and love first. A perceptive teacher like William of Saint-Thierry could write words that we feel are profoundly valid even for our time: "If reason instructs love and love illumines reason, if reason is converted into love and love consents to be held within the bounds of reason, they can do something great" (*De Natura et dignitate amoris*, 21, 8). What is this "something great" that we can witness? It is the promotion of responsibility for life which brings to fruition the gift that each one makes of him or herself to the other. It is the fruit of a love that

can think and choose in complete freedom, without letting itself be conditioned unduly by the possible sacrifice requested. From this comes the miracle of life that parents experience in themselves, as they sense the extraordinary nature of what takes place in them and through them. No mechanical technique can substitute the act of love that husband and wife exchange as the sign of a greater mystery which (as protagonists and sharers in creation) sees them playing the lead and sharing in creation.

Unfortunately, more and more often we see sorrowful events that involve adolescents, whose reactions show their incorrect knowledge of the mystery of life and of the risky implications of their actions. The urgent need for education to which I often refer, primarily concerns the theme of life. I sincerely hope that young people in particular will be given very special attention so that they may learn the true meaning of love and prepare for it with an appropriate education in sexuality, without letting themselves be distracted by ephemeral messages that prevent them from reaching the essence of the truth at stake. To circulate false illusions in the context of love or to deceive people concerning the genuine responsibilities that they are called to assume with the exercise of their own sexuality does not do honour to a society based on the principles of freedom and democracy. Freedom must be conjugated with truth and responsibility with the force of dedication to the other, even with sacrifice; without these components the human community does not grow and the risk of enclosing itself in an asphyxiating cycle of selfishness is always present.

The teaching expressed by the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is not easy. Yet it conforms with the fundamental structure through which life has always been transmitted since the world's creation, with respect for nature and in conformity with its needs. Concern for human life and safeguarding the person's dignity require us not to leave anything untried so that all may be involved in the genuine truth of responsible conjugal love in full adherence to the law engraved on the heart of every person. With these sentiments I impart the Apostolic Blessing to you all.