

JPIC Corner

Volume 3 Issue 1

January 2010

An E-Publication of the United States Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to promote Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. **Sign up now.**

Coordinator's Note

Brother Warren Perrotto, MSC

JPIC Coordinator

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Haitian people at this time.

Fostering A Culture of Life

What is a culture of life?

Hopefully, as Catholics, we are familiar with the term. Yet if someone asked us the above question, how would we answer? A culture of life is an approach to human existence that is based on the dignity of each and every human being. It calls us to identify areas in our lives and in our society where more respect for the human person is needed and to act in a way that upholds the dignity of everyone. A culture of life is fundamentally founded on Jesus Christ.

Although much progress has been made affirming human rights and human dignity we cannot remain passive. We still have much work to do. Although slavery, e.g., has been outlawed in many places throughout the world, it still appears in the forms of human trafficking and forced labor. Furthermore, often some of the "solutions" to important issues of social justice are themselves, violations of human dignity and human rights. Abortion e.g. devalues the dignity of the human person and does not solve the underlying issues of economic insecurity, early sexual activity, unhealthy relationships, discrimination against pregnant women in the workplace, etc.

Catholics describe this tendency to solve our moral dilemmas through destructive methods as the culture of death. Abortion, euthanasia, suicide, the death penalty, economic disparity, violence, etc. are often accepted because they are



Life is a precious gift that is meant to be respected and celebrated.

the criteria of "efficiency, functionality, and usefulness." (Evangelium Vitae (EV), 23) In this way, the culture of death justifies behavior against life. In a society where death is the modus operandi, thoughts and emotions toward death as a means to an end in personal, social, cultural religious and political arenas, become more "logical" or "normal." (Cf. EV, 18)

I believe the solution to overcome a culture of death is to promote a culture of life. The Pro-life movement and Catholic Social Justice both promote and foster this culture of life. Each human being is created in the image and likeness of God and endowed with human dignity and worth, from the moment of conception to natural death. To have a culture of life, we need to have respect for human dignity. A human person has no dignity if his or her life is not valued. They are inseparable.

The Mission Statement for the culture of life is Jesus Himself. In His identity as Son, His words and His actions show us that the culture of life embraces all of humanity as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of our Father. The culture of life fosters a civilization of love where all persons are united as one in Christ.

Continued page 2

1. Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, NY: Doubleday, 2007, p. 197.
2. Carl Anderson, *A Civilization of Love: What Every Catholic Can Do to Transform the World*. NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008, p. 140.

How to Respond When A Loved One Is Facing a Crisis Pregnancy

One way we help build the culture of life is through our response to people in need, including pregnant women facing difficult situations. Researching area resources helps prepare us in case someone comes to us for help.

If someone we love is facing a difficult or unexpected pregnancy, it is also important to listen to her, be supportive, and be willing to help. Let her know that you love and support her and are there for her during this time. If applicable,

let her know that while you love and support her, abortion is not a true solution. Some women who seek post abortion healing say that they wish someone had spoken up against abortion when they were weighing their options. If she needs help with housing, medical care, etc., encourage her to check out a local pregnancy center that can connect her to area resources.

While your friend or family member may just need a loving, pa-

tient listener during this difficult time, she might also need you to support her in other ways. Let her know that she can contact you if she needs anything. There are many ways you may be able to help. For instance, perhaps she needs a ride to her prenatal check ups, or someone to watch her other kids while she is at the doctor's office.

Related Links:

- [My Daughter is Pregnant](#)
- [Help Near You](#)

Fostering a Culture of Life Continued...

When people are used as a means to an end (i.e. in an exploitative situation) and when one's neighbor is seen as one who only belongs to my group or nation, people are marginalized and are denied their rights and liberties as human beings. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-35), however, demonstrates clearly that an outsider is also my neighbor. The Good Samaritan is the good neighbor. The Samaritans and Jews were enemies, but the Good Samaritan believed first in the dignity and value of all persons. It was not important that the person by the side of the road was not a member of his community. The Samaritan saw him as a fellow human being in need of healing. He approached him, cured his wounds and carried the Jew to an inn for further care and paid for his expenses while he was away. The Good Samaritan did not use the suffering one as a means to an end. Neither did he define the victim by his particular social, religious, racial or ethnic origins. Both victim and healer are equals. For the Samaritan, "the foreigner makes himself the neighbor and shows me that I have to learn to be a neighbor deep within and that I have the answer in myself. I have to become like someone in love, someone whose heart is open to being shaken up by another's need. Then I find my neighbor or—better—then I am found by him."¹ In a culture of life, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) The culture of life is not selective. It em-

braces the truth that each person is "seen as good in himself or herself."²

Fostering a culture of life today is a pressing need and challenging task for the global community. It is the responsibility of the human community to enter into dialogue and to develop the formation of consciences. Indeed, all together we must build a new culture of life: new, because it will be able to confront and solve today's unprecedented problems affecting human life: new because it will be adopted with deeper and more conviction by all Christians: new because it will be capable of bringing about a serious and cultural dialogue among all parties. (EV, 95)

God gives us the freedom to choose life or death. He asks us to "Choose Life." (Cf. Deuteronomy 31:19) Jesus, God's Son announces the Good News as a culture of life. This is so that the human community may be a community of life and for life.

Did You Know?

- Approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders into slavery
- Children of unmarried teen mothers who do not receive a high school diploma are 9 times more likely to grow up in poverty.
- 1 in 3 girls who have been in a serious relationship say they've been concerned about being physically hurt by their partner.

Respecting Life Without Judging Others

Our Catholic faith calls us to stand up against injustice, to stand up for the rights of all people, but especially those who are vulnerable, marginalized or otherwise unable to make their voices heard. However, at the same time, Catholic teaching reminds us that while we can judge certain actions, we must never judge the person performing those actions. Only God can judge.

This distinction between judging an action and a person is particularly important to our response to issues which go against a culture of life. It is often all too easy to judge the person who chooses to have an abortion (or the doctor who performs it). While we can, and should, say that these actions are gravely wrong, we must exercise great care not to judge the person. Similarly, while we can judge the action of a person who abuses their spouse or children, and while we should put an end to his or her behavior, we cannot judge the person or tell them that there is no hope for change. With God's grace, anyone can change his or her ways.

To the right are a couple other thinking points which you may find helpful with respect to the abortion issue. While these factors do not in any way justify having an abortion, an awareness of this background information sometimes makes it easier not to judge the women who do, and may even help us think of ways we can help women choose life.

- Women who have never married have 66% of all abortions in the USA. Facing an unexpected pregnancy alone or feeling unable to care for the child can influence a woman's decision. 14% of women who have abortions cite "not enough support from husband or partner" as a reason.
- Women who choose abortions often are pressured by their partners or others. 14% of women who have abortions cite the fact that their husband or partner wanted them to as a reason. A smaller, but still significant percentage (6%), cite that their parents wanted them to have an abortion.
- The rate of abortion among women living below the federal poverty line is 4x that of women living at 300% of the poverty line. 22% of women who have abortions cite unemployment as a reason and 28% say they cannot afford a baby and child care.
- Some women who have abortions have been victims themselves of other serious violations of the Culture of Life. 2% cite "husband is abusive to me or my children" as a reason, and 1% cited "was a victim of rape". Although a small percentage of all abortions, these figures translate to over 36,000 abortions each year.

Healthy Pregnancy

Part of building a culture that respects life is promoting healthy pregnancies. We need to support expecting parents and help ensure quality prenatal care for all pregnant women. (In the US, the maternal mortality rate is 3x higher among non-Hispanic Black women than Hispanic and non-Hispanic White women.) Need information about pregnancy health? Get started with the websites below:

- www.womenshealth.gov
- www.cdc.gov/



Abortion: Some Underlying Issues

For some women, abortion appears to be the only alternative, a solution to a difficult situation. Yet a look at some of the reasons women have abortions reveals cause for concern about other social justice issues.

For instance, a significant percentage of women who have abortions cite financial inability to care for a child (or another child) as the reason. 22% cite unemployment, 23% cite that they cannot afford the basic needs of life, 28% cite inability to afford a baby and child care (note: participants in the survey could choose multiple reasons). Catholic Social Teaching tells us that every person has basic rights, including the right to medical care, shelter, adequate food, education, etc. Every person should also be able to find work which provides a standard of living worthy of the dignity of the human person (and we should care for those who are unable to find such work through no fault of their own). The fact that nearly a quarter of women who have an abortion cite inability to afford the basic needs of life as a reason suggests that as a society, we need to better address the injustices of poverty and inadequate employment.

Another underlying issue is how pregnancy affects a woman's education and career goals. 38% of women who have abortions cite that having a baby would interfere with their job/career and 38% also say a baby would interfere with their education. 21% cite not being able to leave their job to care for a baby. Although these reasons certainly do not justify taking an innocent life, they strongly suggest that much work still needs to be done to ensure that pregnant women are not unfairly discriminated against. Working women should not be fired because they are pregnant, yet the fact that over a fifth of women cite inability to leave their job to care for a baby suggests that we need to find ways to create a more family friendly work environment, where new mothers can take a temporary leave of absence without losing their jobs or fearing that they will be discriminated against in the future. Pregnant students should not be expelled from school, pressured to leave, or otherwise prevented from completing their studies (although alternate plans made need to be made and their graduation date may need to be delayed).

As we work to build a culture which respects and values life, let us work to both reduce the number of abortions and to correct underlying the injustices which may influence a woman's decision to have an abortion. Abortion is not the solution and choosing between having a job and having a child (or between finishing school and having a child) is hardly "choice." Women should not have to "choose" between one injustice and another. Therefore, let us work to truly empower women and families by providing concrete assistance to pregnant women and families in need and working to overcome poverty, eliminate discrimination, and create family friendly workplaces.



Know Your Rights

Pregnant women are protected by law under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the Family Medical Leave Act. If you believe that you have been unfairly discriminated against in the workplace because you are pregnant (and you work for a business with 15 or more employees), you have 180 days to file a charge. Learn more about these laws and what to do if you think your rights have been violated by clicking the links below:

- [Know Your Pregnancy Rights](#)
- [Facts About Pregnancy Discrimination](#)
- [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

Alternatives to Abortion

There are two alternatives to abortion: parenting and adoption. When making a decision, take your time; there are many factors to consider when determining which option would be better for you and your child. A trained counselor can help you make an informed decision.

Adoption

These days, parents giving a child up for adoption have more options and much more control over the family with whom the child is placed. Besides closed adoptions, there are also semi-open and open adoptions. You can choose what type of adoption you think would be best for you and your child. You also have the right to choose the family. A trained counselor can help you determine if adoption is the best option for you and your child.

Adoption Resources

- [Adoption Factbook](#)
- [Things to consider](#)
- [Rights of expectant parents](#)
- [Adoption by state](#)
- [Thinking about adopting a child?](#)

Parenting

Parenting is very challenging but it is also extraordinarily rewarding and fulfilling. If you are struggling financially, a pregnancy center can help connect you to resources available in your area.



Photo by Walter de Maria

Parenting Resources

To help in the decision-making process:

- [Questions You May Have](#)
- [Help Near You](#)

Other resources – Parenting tips, etc.

- [OneToughJob.org](#)
- [KidsHealth.org](#)
- [USA.gov Parenting Resources](#)
- [Information about Child Support in the USA](#)

Pregnant? Need Help?



Think you may be pregnant? Pregnant and don't want to have an abortion or are not sure? Get free pregnancy tests, information about your options and the support you need. Several pregnancy centers have online chat, so you can get your questions answered even faster!

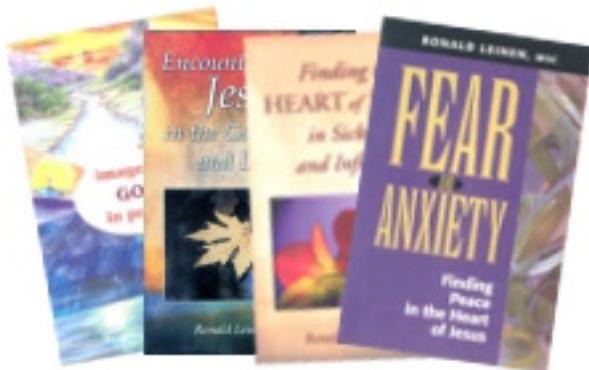
- [Birthright International](#) **1.800.550.4900**
- [Option Line](#) **1.800.395.HELP**
- [The Nurturing Network](#) **1.800.TNN.4MOM**
- [Bethany Christian Services](#) – **1.800.BETHANY**
- [Find a Pregnancy Center near you](#)

Other places to contact for help include your local Catholic Charities or your local parish.

How do we respond to loved ones who are affected emotionally by abortion?

Unfortunately, the general public largely ignores the negative effects of abortion. Groups that promote access to abortion often claim that abortion has no negative impact on a woman's mental health, making it even more difficult for women who are experiencing grief, guilt or other difficulties to seek help. Women who later experience grief and suffering may believe that their reactions are abnormal and that there is nowhere to turn for help.

Anecdotal evidence from counselors who work with women seeking healing after an abortion (such as those who work with Project Rachel) shows that the negative impact of abortion is frequently delayed. Shortly after the abortion a woman may feel relief, with symptoms of grief developing 5 to 12 years later. In addition to grief, women report experiencing low self-esteem, alienation from friends and family, depression, difficulty concentrating, guilt, anger towards self or others involved in the abortion, sleep disorders, alcohol and drug problems,



The MSC offer several spirituality books!

[Learn more.](#)

Tell us what you think!

What does your parish do to foster the culture of life? What are some things that you can do?



Email Br. Warren at jpic@misacor-usa.org.



JPIC Corner, a monthly publication
Publisher: The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
Provincial: V. Rev. Raymond Diesbourg, MSC
JPIC Coordinator: Bro. Warren Perrotto, MSC
Editors: Lindsay Marcellus, Harini Riana

If you are struggling with the loss of a child, including due to abortion or miscarriage, we invite you to attend one of our Life's Healing Journey retreats. [Learn more here....](#)

and anniversary reactions of grief or depression on the date of the abortion or the due date.

Abortion can also emotionally affect the father of the baby as well as grandparents, whether they were involved in the decision or only found out afterwards.

If someone you love is emotionally affected by abortion and comes to you, there are some general steps that you can take to help.

- Listen. Let her (or him) tell you as much or as little as she (or he) wants to. Don't tell them how they "should" feel but rather allow them to express their feelings.
- Assure the person of your love and support, both now and in the future.
- Let him or her know about help for people who are struggling after an abortion. Give them the name and number of the local Project Rachel.

Resources for Post Abortion Healing:

- [Project Rachel](#)
- [Rachel's Vineyard](#)
- [Find an abortion recovery program near you](#)
- [Abortion's Aftermath \(with link to How to Talk to a Friend Who Has Had an Abortion\)](#)
- [A Special Word to Women Who Have Had an Abortion](#)

Please Join Us in Prayer

Please pray for all the people affected by the January 12th earthquake in Haiti, as well as those working to respond to this disaster.

For more information about the MSC, please visit our website: www.misacor-usa.org

The MSC have made donating easy and convenient using PayPal and ParishPay.

