

From The Pastor

The first Sunday of October has long been held as Respect for Life Sunday. This annual observance stands as an essential reminder of our dignity and value as human beings in relationship to the God who has given us life. In a world that increasingly seeks to promote its own agenda of self-interest we are constantly called to a moral vigilance that honors our stance as creatures of God.

This annual observance also serves as a call to awareness in election years that alerts to important campaign issues or proposals on the ballot. As mature Christians, we have a right to be heard in the public sector on issues of moral and human importance. This year is no different, and again challenges us to speak on behalf of the dignity of human life in all its forms.

Respect for Life issues can become quite wearisome and distasteful given the political climate that surrounds it. Questionable tactics and practices on both sides of the issue can cause many good-hearted Christians to turn away from the challenge of good choices simply because of the political baggage that hides the heart of the matter. The fact remains that we are created by God, and we belong to God. We exist to be loved by God and to serve and reveal God's glory. To separate ourselves as if all life choices were for the sake of our own convenience and pleasure would surely prove to be a disaster.

This theme is evident in today's gospel. In the story of the vineyard, God is the one that does all that can be done to allow for full and fruitful growth. He is the owner of the vineyard and looks for a fruitful crop. Those put in charge of the vineyard represent all humanity. We have been given all we need to make abundant the life we share in God.

The plan goes awry when those in the vineyard want it all for themselves. They show no respect for the servants of the Master to the point of beating and killing them. Finally, they kill even the Son so as to gain for themselves his inheritance. Their attitude and thinking is one of separation from God that leads to spiritual death. Selfish, self-centered living that serves personal gain and convenience can only lead to moral decline and depravity. The Son that is killed is the Son of Man due to the ignorance and blindness of humanity that insists on its ways against the ways of God.

God alone is the giver of life. To imply or act as though we have a better plan for ourselves for the sake of our own purpose is to set ourselves against the designs of God. Mature faith in Christ challenges us to better choices.

Proposal 2 seeks to allow full use of embryonic stem cells for the sake of medical research in seeking cures for serious illness. The proposal includes language that would limit any legislative oversight or direction. It serves as an unrestricted open door for the use and destruction of embryonic stem cells, which could lead to human cloning and/or the mixing of animal and human DNA.

The Catholic Church opposes the use of human embryonic stem cells because it necessitates the destruction of these human cells that have potential for full human life. Further, there has not been one case of viable gain toward any cure through the use of these cells.

The Church fully supports adult stem cells research for the advancement of cures of human illness. Adult stem cell research has yielded dozens of treatments and cures for debilitating diseases. By contrast, embryonic stem cells have produced no cures, and present the intrinsic evil of destroying human life.

Embryonic stem cell research is not illegal in Michigan. Researchers are permitted to purchase human embryonic cells that were destroyed outside of Michigan for the purpose of their research. No embryonic stem cell may legally be destroyed in Michigan. Proposal 2 would change that, and much more. To pass Proposal 2 would give politicians and special interest groups regulation over such research, as well as the economic windfall it could produce; often at taxpayer's expense.

The moral challenge is to protect the dignity of human life. Economic gain or medical advancements that are not evident are no reason to compromise the dignity of human life. Effective and promising results are already proven through the use of adult stem cells without any compromise to the value and protection of human cells.

A 'NO' vote on Proposal 2 protects human dignity and life. It leaves in place legislation the voters of this state have previously enacted regarding this issue.

Pray for wisdom and insight in these important matters. We belong to the vineyard of the Lord and God alone is the one who prunes the vines. May our hearts be pruned for justice and the dignity of human life.

Father John Esper