

Take the Opportunity to Discuss Life Issues

Reasons to Be Pro-Choice?

Recently, *NY Times* columnist & Catholic Ross Douthat wrote about 'abortion extremists' among his liberal friends. **Abortion supporters** responded in letters to the editor [*NYT*, 4/15/18]. Some of their key points are paraphrased here together with a Catholic response by your editor. (Note: this is the second part of a two-part series.)

- Rather than outlawing abortion of developing babies with medical problems, we should expand Medicaid to cover the lifelong expenses involved in caring for those with Down syndrome and other conditions. *NOTE: another letter that was published provides a good response: "Violence inside the womb to unborn humans who have been completely dehumanized is undoubtedly adding to violence outside the womb. Killing babies with Down syndrome before they are born is a revival of Nazi eugenics mentality. On the day when the unborn child is recognized as a human being with unalienable rights, we will have advanced one giant step toward humanity outside the womb."*

- Abortion rates fall significantly with access to birth control. You cannot be against abortion and also against birth control. *Catholic Response: The promotion of unrestricted sex from many corners of our culture is the underlying cause of casual "hook-ups," many "unintended" pregnancies & therefore high abortion rates, not birth control techniques themselves. The Church promotes natural methods for controlling the timing of pregnancy & opposes putting hormones, with their side effects, in women's bodies.*

- The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reports that more than a third of abortions take place in the first six weeks of gestation. This is acceptable since such tiny embryos do not look human and lack most essential organs. *Catholic Response: Despite the tiny form of embryos, science teaches that they have all the DNA, all the makings of a full human being. Size should not determine when it is okay to destroy another human being.*

Not one letter writer talked about controlling one's sexual appetite, or not being promiscuous. A woman cannot have an abortion if she is not pregnant. And she cannot become pregnant if she chooses not to be intimate with a male. The Church has always promoted the beauty of **intimacy within marriage**, and the beauty of marriage based on self-control, sharing and respect for one's spouse. Unlike the animal kingdom that is driven strictly by biological forces, human society needs men & women who are responsible, who are loving, who respect the opposite sex, and who exert self-control.

Wasn't the Avengers Movie Interesting?

Marvel's *Avengers: Infinity War* has already made over \$1.6 billion worldwide. The movie's villain, Thanos, is on a quest to put together the Infinity Gauntlet to obliterate half of all life in the universe. He once watched his own civilization crumble, apparently from overpopulation and lack of resources; ever since, he has traveled to different planets, murdering half of their inhabitants so the same fate cannot befall them. Better that half a population die so that the rest can prosper.

For friends or relatives who have seen the movie, we can have a conversation about these values. Most people know it is wrong to deliberately kill so many people, thinking it will save others. So a good question is: how many deaths is an acceptable number to trade for prosperity and plenty?

Many abortion supporters claim that we live in a world where it's better to kill some of the unborn rather than strain our finite natural resources supporting them all. Some politicians have campaigned for the "right" of the terminally ill to commit suicide in order to free up valuable resources for healthier people.

Why are some lives considered more valuable than others? Who, if anyone, should make that judgment? Why would we choose to eliminate people in need rather than working to meet the needs of all people? Talking to others about the movie is a low-pressure way to plant seeds of truth that **every life is inherently valuable**, worth protecting. [based on Anna Rose Riccard, *Avengers: A Pro-Life Conversation Starter*, USCCB.org, 5/18/18]

Poland Pays Families to Have Babies

Poland's government offers families \$139 per month per child, from the second child onwards, and from the first in poor households). Recently, it proposed a new family bonus for having a second child within two years of the first. The country has one of the lowest fertility rates in Europe. Over 400,000 children were born in 2017, about 20,000 more than the previous year. [*The Economist*, 5/12/18]

At the same time, the Centers for Disease Control reports that the **U.S. 2017 fertility rate** for women was the lowest since the government began tracking it over a century ago. Lower birth rates could worsen the problems of America's aging population, with a smaller share of young workers to pay into Social Security & Medicare. [*Wall StJnl.*, 5/17/18]



Technology & Life's Contradictions

The material cost to the woman who would be denied the opportunity to terminate her pregnancy is a hard, plain fact, but the body of the child she would abort is no less material. The two facts collide, and we feel the impact more keenly thanks to new technologies. Modern imaging technology has enabled us to see for ourselves that **prenatal development is continuous and gradual**, marked by no visible or tangible quantum leaps.

In the late 1950s, with this expansion and refinement of our scientific knowledge of life in the womb, vacuum-aspiration techniques for abortion were developed, replacing curettes for scraping the fetus from the uterus. The improvement to the efficiency and, for the woman, the safety of surgical abortion was revolutionary. In nation after nation, efforts to legalize abortion soon took off—ironically, against the background of a more accurate, detailed understanding of how the human organism remains itself even as it develops from conception through birth. Magazines in the 1960s ran stunning **photographs of the unborn** from their earliest stages of gestation, even as the news chronicled the movement to strike down laws protecting those wondrous human beings such as we all once were. The contradiction cried out for a resolution that the world still awaits.

Meanwhile, advances in perinatal medicine had begun to enable doctors to perform **surgery on the fetus** & otherwise treat him directly as a patient to a degree that would have been hard to imagine earlier. And the age at which a child born prematurely could survive continued to drop. Medical progress for treating the unborn and the newborn has shifted public discourse in a direction favorable to the pro-life view that the **moral worth of the unborn child** is not different from that of the child born. Pulling us in the opposite direction is a recognition of the relative ease of aborting him by surgical or, since the 1970s, pharmaceutical means. But that miracle of modern medicine is for naught if we recognize the fetus as an infant and recoil from infanticide.

Most people in our day face this ambivalence and ambiguity. They feel—which is to say that their reasoning remains submerged, unconscious—that the injustice to the aborted child is proportionate to his age. Late-term abortion is viewed as virtual infanticide. Abortion in the first few months as virtual contraception. Yet our confidence that a fertilized ovum is not a human being dissolves when we spend enough time contemplating the question. The unborn in the early stages of development differ from us too much for us to feel that they and we belong to the same species, but what we know is that we too were once as they. Try as we might to repress the knowledge, it finds ways to return.

SPECIAL OFFER: The preceding excerpt about Technology & Life was taken from an article by Nicholas Frankovich in the current issue of the *Human Life Review*, an outstanding journal that covers many topics regarding the culture of life. As a reader of this newsletter, you can obtain a **free subscription** to the journal's digital version by visiting www.humanlifereview.com. Click on Subscribe and choose Digital Subscription. Enter your email address, password & some other info. **For Coupon, enter ft618.** You will be charged \$0 for subscribing. The editor thanks the *HLR* for making this offer available to our readers.

Single and Catholic?

Michael Gross, 46, of a West St. Paul parish, says that participating in a parish men's group with both married and single men has been "a huge opportunity to learn and grow in community, shoulder each other's struggles and grief, and **walk alongside one another in faith.**"

Many single Catholics belong to the Church, but at times still face the challenge of finding Christ-centered fellowship with singles and others. Though parishes may not have specific ministries for single Catholics, singles can find fellowship while serving with other parishioners in various parish ministries such as the Knights of Columbus, Respect Life ministry, gatherings such as First Saturday men's and women's groups, and even single Catholics clubs. Some singles who want to meet other Catholics join the largest Catholic dating site in the world, www.CatholicMatch.com.

There are also **National Catholic Singles Conferences** held annually or semi-annually in different U.S. locations. This year's conference will be held June 8-10 near Minneapolis. More than 500 single Catholics, ages 18 and up, are expected to come together for talks by Catholic speakers, prayer, liturgies, socializing, dancing, dining and fun, all inspired by the theology of the body, Pope St. John Paul II's profound teaching on the human person. [Susan Klemond, *How Single Catholics Can Find Christ-Centered Community*, *Nat. Cath. Register*, 5/13/18]

Attack on Catholic Charities

Recently, the Philadelphia Archdiocese was forced to sue the city because Catholic Social Services was barred from placing children in foster care due to Catholic beliefs. According to Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, chair of the USCCB committee on religious liberty, the great fear now is that Cath. Charities and other such groups will be forced to **withdraw from providing child care** & adoption services, or to compromise their principles. That's one of the reasons for promoting Religious Freedom Week that ends on the Sunday before July 4th. [G. Crowe, *Our Sunday Visitor*, 5/20/18]

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