



Office of the Bishop
Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock

August 12, 2020

Recent news stories have announced an attempted return to Lubbock and the South Plains of west Texas by Planned Parenthood. It probably doesn't need to be said that Roman Catholics in the area are disappointed and disturbed by this possibility.

Several years ago morally minded members of the area worked for and celebrated the closing of the Planned Parenthood facility in Lubbock, located just across the parking lot from the good work of Lubbock's Nurturing Center.

The possibility of Planned Parenthood's return to Lubbock will not go unchallenged. Local Catholics and other Pro-life advocates will mobilize to remind people of the tacit but very well-known activities of Planned Parenthood. As Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Lubbock, I am deeply concerned at the prospect of Planned Parenthood's presence and activities returning to the South Plains.

This does, however, provide all people of conscience on the South Plains an opportunity to reflect on the dignity which every human life deserves. That dignity begins at the moment of conception and must be protected throughout the course of human life through the moment of natural death. The natural dignity of human life, deriving from its origin and likeness to the image of its Divine Creator, is subjected to assaults of various kinds in our individualistic, materialistic throwaway culture.

To defend against these assaults, we need to put the care of our fellow human beings as a top priority. This includes many aspects of life. We need to work for adequate funding for education for all children. We should work to ensure that our neighbors have sufficient health care, and we need to work to battle food insecurity in our communities. This is being pro-life.

We must remember that when we defend the dignity of every life, we struggle for legitimate power. We need to work to support those who feel powerless—the immigrant, the unemployed, the underemployed—which includes working toward a living wage and working to ensure the respect for and care of the elders of our communities. This is being pro-life.

The pandemic with which we continue struggling has given us a common battle to fight and a chance to reflect on the value we place on life. We have been more thoughtful and full of care for our parents, elders in our families and our communities—and our children. We continue to work—mindful of others—to slow the spread of the virus and to support our neighbors to dignify their existence. This is being pro-life.

There are differences of opinion as to how to combat COVID-19. The rush to find a vaccine, treatments and a cure continue reminding us of the human capacity to try to tame nature, but every movement we make needs to respect appropriate moral boundaries.

We cannot lose our civility with one another even as we endure the stress of our pandemic reality, and we cannot forget the essential dignity of every life.

Conception of human life is a beautiful act of co-creation in which a husband and wife in the embrace of love cooperate with the Divine Creator to bring about a unique human person from the moment of fertilization. Downgrading that human life to a “product of conception” whose life can be willfully ended by any means is an affront to human dignity.

There is help available for those who find that pregnancy puts them in a crisis situation, help provided through resources like the Nurturing Center.

Throughout the human life span there are ways the dignity of human life is disrespected. Abuse and abandonment of children affront that dignity. Situations of violence and poverty diminish the dignity of life. Toleration of homelessness on our streets and hunger in homes in west Texas offend that dignity.

Racism, intolerance and discrimination disrespect human dignity. Reducing human beings to a commodity through trafficking of persons— as exists in our area— is a recognizable disrespect of life. Irresponsible use of natural resources will ultimately lead to the inability of human life to flourish.

There is a wave sweeping across our country which takes the end of natural life—belonging properly and solely in the hands of its Divine Creator— into the hands of human beings. Assisted suicide and euthanasia are serious offenses against the dignity of human life.

And recent moral study and thinking have determined that civil authorities and the state have no right or authority to destroy human life as a punishment for criminal activity.

As a native Texan I am embarrassed by our unabashed use of the antiquated and immoral death penalty in our state, which has also begun, again, on the federal level.

Human life possesses inherent dignity which needs to be protected and defended.

As we confront Planned Parenthood’s possible return to the area, Pro-life and Pro-choice partisans need to take on a broad perspective. Polarization in speech and action will not ultimately defend the dignity of life.

I propose that all people of good will find the common ground of our humanity to look at the causes of our society’s loss of respect for life. There are ways we can work together to assist people in crisis, remedy the causes of violence and poverty and crime, and find creative ways to build a better life and society for all people, regardless of ethnicity, language, culture, and religion.

We have an opportunity to work together. This moment on the South Plains presents us with such an opportunity on behalf of our fellow human beings. What concrete step can I take today to show my personal respect for the precious gift of human life?



Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver

Bishop of Lubbock

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