Mourning the Loss of Pro-Life Advocates

On October 8th Student for Life of America (SFLA) staff members were returning from a pro-life conference along with two students when they were injured in a tragic automobile accident that ultimately claimed three lives. Kortney Blythe Gordon and her pre-born baby, Sophy were killed in the crash, and Jon Scharfenberger died ten days later due to complications suffered in the accident. Kortney was a Field Director for SFLA and Sophy was her and her husband Benjamin’s first child. Jon was SFLA’s Pregnant on Campus Coordinator and Campus Support Coordinator. During the previous summer he worked as an intern for SFLA and for National Right to Life. The passing of Kortney, Sophy, and Jon is a great loss to the pro-life community and prayers are needed for their families.
Abortion Awareness: Is Your Church Too Silent?  
By Marie Bowen, Presbyterians Pro-Life Executive Director

Most pro-life congregation members wish for their pastor to speak out boldly against the evil of abortion. They want their churches to take action and to engage in life-affirming ministry. Let me gently suggest that maybe it is you and not your pastor who needs to take action. I’m not letting pastors off the hook entirely. Pastors absolutely need to be teaching comprehensively on the value of human life as indicated throughout Scripture. God is crazy about us! Our Creator made us in his own image, and claims us for his own. He has purchased us with the costly sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. That message should pervade a pastor’s sermons year round. Silence on abortion is not an acceptable option, but it is not only pastors who are too silent!

Your pastor is called to shepherd the whole congregation.

Pastors are very aware that the people in their pews on Sunday hold divergent views on social issues. He may think that peaking too directly to social issues like abortion may alienate members of the congregation and close doors to future ministry. Few topics are more emotionally charged than those surrounding pregnancy. In a single congregation there may be members who have had abortions, paid for abortions, urged daughters or wives to abort a child, and also those who have struggled with infertility. Those who desperately want to conceive a child may be angry at the thought that some women have “thrown away” a baby's life. Others may be adamant that a woman has the right to choose whether or not she will carry her baby to term. It may seem to your pastor that silence is preferable to the emotional free-for-all that might result if he speaks publicly against abortion unleashing disagreement.

Silence about abortion may not mean you agree.

On the other hand, it is essential to understand that silence about abortion in your congregation does NOT indicate that your congregation is united on this issue. Most church members have an assumption of agreement on essentials of the faith. If your church has not discussed abortion publicly, you probably believe that those in your community of faith hold the same beliefs that you hold about the sacred value of human life. It can be very disturbing to learn that you disagree with those who sit next to you in worship on Sunday. However, if a congregation hopes to minister to the deep hurts and broken places in the lives of its members, breaking the silence on abortion is essential. You could be the one to begin the conversation.

Breaking silence while facilitating ministry

Here are some ways to open dialogue and ministry without creating division or making your pastor the focal point of controversy.

1) Offer a Sunday School class or Bible study. Make Scripture the focus and authority on the topic of abortion and human life. Pregnant with Promise is a Bible study centered on God’s character as revealed through the pregnancy stories of the Bible. For those who have experienced abortion and need to find healing and forgiveness, PPL recommends Forgiven and Set Free & Healing a Father’s Heart, Bible studies by Linda Cochrane & Kathy Jones.

2) Engaging your congregation by joining hands with your local pregnancy care center or adoption agency is a way to affirm life in the womb. An unsung hero of the pro-life movement is the birth mother, who can help church members begin to think about life in the womb without the divisiveness of political dialogue.

Praying to end abortion

Once your congregation has opened dialogue on abortion, has studied what Scripture teaches on the sacredness of human life, and has essential agreement, then you are ready to become active as a congregation in working to end abortion in your church, your community and the nation.

Enacting the Pain-Capable Unborn Children Protection Act in Our Nation’s Capital

The Obama administration has taken a variety of actions that directly limit religious freedom in the United States. Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey stated in a EWTN interview with Raymond Arroyo that President Obama’s Executive Order supposedly ensuring that federal funds would not be used for abortion and that individuals who opposed abortion would be protected under a conscience clause, “was less than a fig leaf, it actually prescribes, allows, permits, mandates abortion in all of the health care that goes into effect in 2014.”

Congressman Smith continued, “So President Obama, the abortion president, is at it once again, saying one thing over here while doing aggressively something with the other hand promoting abortion and promoting an anti-conscious provision that is unprecedented in American history.”

On the basis of evidence that unborn children can experience pain at least by 20 weeks after fertilization, during 2010 and 2011 five states passed laws that protect unborn children from abortion after this time.

However, in our nation’s capital, the District of Columbia, abortion is currently allowed at any point in pregnancy, and for any reason. Because the Constitution puts the District under the direct legislative authority of Congress and the President, Congressman Trent Franks (R-AZ.), with the strong support of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), has introduced the District of Columbia Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act (H.R. 3803).

If this bill were enacted, abortion of unborn babies who are capable of feeling pain, past 20 weeks, would be illegal in the District, as it already is in Alabama, Kansas, Idaho, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. As yet, there has been no serious legal challenge to any of these laws.

“Today, in our nation’s capital, a district that the Constitution puts directly under the authority of Congress and the President, an unborn child can be killed at any point prior to birth, for any reason,” said NRLC Federal Legislative Director Douglas Johnson. “If abortion of these pain-capable unborn children remains unrestricted in the nation’s capital, during the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth months, it will be because certain members of Congress, or the President, obstruct this bill. If they do that, then they alone, under the Constitution, are fully accountable for that policy.”

These bills are based on a wealth of evidence that shows how unborn babies can feel pain. By 20 weeks after fertilization, nerves have connected the baby’s pain receptors, which are found throughout the body, to the baby’s brain. Unborn babies react to touch as early as 8 weeks. And at 20 weeks, ultrasounds show unborn babies reacting physically to outside stimuli such as sound, light, and touch. Also at 20 weeks, unborn babies will recoil from stimuli that adults would consider as painful. Neonatal surgeons have even observed that newborns who are not conscious, who are supposed to be unresponsive to pain, will jerk away from sharp objects, and therefore anesthesia is routinely administered to the unborn baby during fetal surgery.

“Modern medical science provides substantial compelling evidence that unborn children recoil from painful stimuli, that their stress hormones increase when they are capable of feeling pain, and that the states have a compelling interest in protecting unborn children who are capable of feeling pain from abortion.”

The bills are very important to the pro-life movement, as they put the public’s focus back on the unborn baby and on how truly terrible and painful the abortion procedure is. While there can be great psychological and sometimes physical harm done to a woman during an abortion, at the center of the procedure there is a helpless baby who is being brutally killed despite his or her silent screams of pain.

For more information on the unborn’s pain and to learn what medical doctors have testified before Congress on the matter, please visit www.nrlc.org-abortion/Fetal_Pain. To get more involved in helping to pass this legislation, please visit the NRLC Legislative Action Center at www.capwiz.com/nrlc/home.