The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Culture of Life
Part II: Culture of Death

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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to "The Armor of Faith," a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Sister Sara Draney is a Dominican Nun from the Monastery of the Infant Jesus in Lufkin, Texas. Helen is a lay-Dominican and has a love for music ministry. The Dominicans, I should mention, are also known as the Order of Preachers. Sharon is still our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone knows by now, I am simply here to ask questions because "why" was my favorite word when I was three. To answer those questions is why we have our panelists, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

> In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
>
> Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.
>
> In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Discussion:

> When we mention the sanctity of life in our politically charged environment, our first thought is likely to turn to abortion. As we mentioned last time, we will discuss, at some length, the subject of abortion during the course of this series, but we will also discuss other areas of concern as we all travel the journey of life from conception until natural death.

God is the creator of life, and while He gave us stewardship over His creation, we must remember God is still the owner. This means that as stewards, we have a responsibility to do the will of the owner, God. If we are to do His will, we must endeavor to understand the meaning and purpose of what He asks of us. If we do not know our faith, we are then left at a disadvantage as we make our choices. We are also at a disadvantage when we are called to encourage one another within our collective effort to accomplish His will.

As we engage our responsibility, we must also remember how we are called to engage as we represent our faith. We must remember the words of 1 Peter 3:9, "*Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing.*"

We also mentioned that while scripture and the Catechism point clearly to the sanctity of life from conception until natural death as well as our call to love God and one another, the discussion can become a challenge when the person with whom we are engaged does not have a common belief in either our faith or perhaps even in our belief in God, His commandments and His natural law. Still, we must not be deterred towards encouraging others to see the importance of life and the sanctity of life.

Today, we're going to discuss what Saint John Paul II referred to as the "culture of death." The purpose of today's discussion is not to get into the errors of the culture of death, though I think that will be hard to avoid as we talk, rather, our focus today is to assess what the culture of death encompasses. We will get into the arguments against the culture of death in a later discussion, but for the moment, we want to examine are the range and beliefs of this culture.

First, let's take a moment to examine the term in relation to our common understanding of the words.

Our friends Merriam-Webster have several definitions in relation to the word "**culture**," but the following two definitions are probably the most central:

> **:** [T]he customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group – also **:** the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time

> **:** [T]he set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization

Our friends Merriam-Webster also have several definitions related to the word, "**death**," but these two, again, are probably the most central:

> **:** the cause or occasion of loss of life

> **:** the state of being no longer alive **:** the state of being dead

(**Question 1:** As we refer to this term, "culture of death," it is meant to describe beliefs and behaviors which are related to enabling or causing "death" as acceptable practice or behavior.

What are some of the beliefs and behaviors which come to mind when we use the term, "culture of death?")

- ➢ Abortion
  - ➔ Convenience
  - ➔ Sex Selection
  - ➔ Eugenics → managing genetic composition or racial/ethnic purity
  - ➔ Poverty
- ➢ Infanticide
- ➢ Assisted Suicide
- ➢ Drug Dependence (exposure to overdose)
- ➢ Euthanasia
- ➢ Suicide
- ➢ Death Penalty
- ➢ Lethal Violence → Murder
- ➢ Neglect (allowing lethal disease and famine)
- ➢ Terrorism
- ➢ Genocide
- ➢ War

(**Question 2:** Every culture justifies their beliefs. As Catholics, for example, we justify our beliefs by what we are taught by our Creator through the many and varied means by which God speaks to us. What are some of the justifications we have heard in relation to the culture of death?)

- ➢ Population Control
- ➢ Too few resources in the world – poor economies
- ➢ We are bad for the environment
- ➢ Child as parasite
- ➢ My body, my choice → child no different than uninvited intruder
- ➢ Convenience → not the right time
- ➢ It is only a clump of cells
- ➢ We are not alive until we take our first breath
- ➢ Countries with legalized abortion have lower abortion rates
- ➢ Compassion (avoidance of perceived hardships)
  - ➔ Don't add to poverty
  - ➔ Don't have to live with affliction
  - ➔ Eliminate undesirable traits (i.e. downs syndrome, cerebral palsy, race)
  - ➔ End suffering
- ➢ Political, racial, religious, economic passions of hate
- ➢ Survival of the fittest (helping Darwin along)
- ➢ Pro-life supporters are hypocrites → We fail Matthew 25:31-46
- ➢ Pro-life supporters are not pro-life, they are pro-birth

(**Question 3:** As we look at these justifications, they are what is offered on the surface, but we might also observe something else underneath. What are some common threads we might observe behind these justifications?)

> ➢ Selfish designs
> ➢ Dehumanization
> ➢ Hate

(**Question 4:** As we discussed cultural values define the boundaries of acceptability to those who subscribe to the culture, but we must recognize that cultures endeavor to grow and gain societal and legal acceptance. In what ways do we find ourselves exposed to and perhaps even seduced to support or subscribe to the culture of death?)

> ➢ Politics
> ➢ News Media
> ➢ Entertainment Media
> ➢ Social Media
> ➢ Education System/Media
> ➢ Health Care System/Administration
> ➢ Religions
> ➢ Anti-Religion Religions (atheists, humanists, secularists)

(**Question 5:** As we observe the culture of death growing and gaining acceptance within our society, there are consequences. What are some of the consequences a culture of death brings to the world?)

> ➢ Life intentionally and prematurely ended
> ➢ Innocent loss of life
> ➢ Loss of humility, civility, dignity, and respect towards one another
> ➢ Increased hostility in social interaction
> ➢ Violence against the innocent
> ➢ Hate inspired violence (murder, terrorism, genocide, war)
> ➢ Loss of gifts and talents

Quotes:

– *John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*
To claim the right to abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia, and to recognize that right in law, means to attribute to human freedom a perverse and evil significance: that of an absolute power over others and against others. This is the death of true freedom.

– *John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*
While it is true that the taking of life not yet born or in its final stages is sometimes marked by a mistaken sense of altruism and human compassion, it cannot be denied that such a culture of

death, taken as a whole, betrays a completely individualistic concept of freedom, which ends up by becoming the freedom of "the strong" against the weak who have no choice but to submit.

– John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)
Those who allow themselves to be influenced by this climate easily fall into a sad vicious circle: when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life; in turn, the systematic violation of the moral law, especially in the serious matter of respect for human life and its dignity, produces a kind of progressive darkening of the capacity to discern God's living and saving presence.

– John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)
This situation, with its lights and shadows, ought to make us all fully aware that we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the "culture of death" and the "culture of life". We find ourselves not only "faced with" but necessarily "in the midst of" this conflict: we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.

Final Thoughts:

The journey of our life begins at conception. At that moment, our first cell is formed and our journey of life is put in motion. The remaining stages of life are a matter of maturity until our natural death. Within that spectrum from conception until natural death, human hand should not be the intentional cause of life's end. We must remember that though life may be taken away by human choice, it cannot be restored by human hand. The choice cannot be turned around.

The temptation of those who subscribe to the culture of life is to view those who subscribe to the culture of death as evil. Indeed, Saint John Paul II described the battle between the culture of life and the culture of death as a battle between good and evil, but we must also consider that there is a difference between individuals and a culture. We must consider that the people who wittingly or unwittingly subscribe to the culture of death are misled by the evil to which they subscribe. Of course, they also believe that we are the ones who are misled as we fail to comprehend the nobleness of their belief, so the tendency is for the conversation to become hostile from both sides.

We must remember that those who accept the culture of death are still children of God, therefore, we must remember that our call is not to judge and condemn, rather, our call is to defend life and encourage everyone to respect for the sanctity of life. Towards this end, we must also remember our call to approach every child of God with humility, civility, dignity, and respect. As we continue our discussions related to this series, we will also discuss the behavior to which we are called as we defend and promote the sanctity of life, not only by our words, but also by what we do.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we begin to discuss defending life.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Culture of Life – Part II: Defending Life

References:

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