



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Culture of Life
Part III: Defending Life



Prayer On the Sidewalk
©Halo Haven Ministries

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, what is an answer without a question? I'll let everyone ponder that meaningless philosophical thought for awhile, anyway, to answer my questions and correct my pronunciation is why we have our panelists, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

We also have a special guest today. Michele Mason is the local coordinator for the 40 Days for Life effort in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She has been involved in pro-life ministry for 15 years, praying at the sidewalk, participating in sidewalk advocacy, representing her parish in the diocesan Respect Life Ministry, and promoting the work of the local Pregnancy Center. So, also a big welcome to Michele as she joins our panel today. We are very glad to have you.

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:

Last time I mentioned that 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 temptation of some 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 or seduced to the culture 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 in solutions of death, 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 during this series, we must remember the behavior to which we are called. As we work to defend life and promote the sanctity of life, we must consider the perceptions we form in others, not only by our words, but also by what we do.

Last time, we discussed the spectrum of the culture of death. Today, we are going to discuss opportunities where we may engage the efforts to defend life. Of course, one of the major battle grounds between the cultures of death and life is abortion. That will be our main focus today, but I want to take a moment to consider the larger picture.

(Question 1: Last time, we mentioned that while we may focus our efforts to defend life in relation to one portion of the spectrum of life, we should make ourselves aware of the spectrum of issues from conception until natural death. **Why might it be important for us to maintain awareness of the full spectrum?)**

- One-on-one discussion opportunities
- Awareness of disinformation across the spectrum
- Awareness of denigration tactics directed against pro-life across the spectrum
- Awareness of how our focus impacts the big picture
- Awareness of how opponents justify the spectrum

(Question 2: During our previous discussions, we mentioned 1 Peter 3:9, where we are told, *“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.”* **Why is the demeanor of our word and deed important as we seek to encourage a culture of life?)**

- Prevent emotionalism from distracting from the issue
- Perceptions of those who observe
- Prevent being pulled into the mud
- Prevent giving ammunition to emotionalism
- Importance of humility, civility, dignity, and respect to maintain a conversation

(1 Peter 3:14-16)

14 But even if you should suffer because of righteousness, blessed are you. Do not be afraid or terrified with fear of them, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, 16 but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.

(Question 3: So, I just provided scripture as a means for us to understand the demeanor to which we are called as we engage one another. Of course, that is because, as a matter of our belief in God, we have a common understanding of the authority of scripture. While knowledge of scripture is helpful to what is in our heart, why might it be counter productive to our efforts to communicate to the heart of another? How can we approach the discussion when we do not have a common belief in God?)

- The appearance of preaching can close the ears of both mind and heart
- The appearance of judgment can close the ears of both mind and heart
- Scripture, so what – a book of myths (just diverted us from discussion of life)
- Listen – what is the real concern – what is the real fear?
- What are the scientific facts of life – where does life physically begin?
- What is the danger should we not care when life is taken by human hand?
- When did we all gain the right to live?
- Where is the choice of the defenseless?
- If there is no right to life, it becomes a matter of the powerful over the weak
- What happens when we become the one who is weak?

(Question 4: Ok, now that we discussed how the quoting of scripture can be counter productive to the discussion with someone who does not believe in God as we do, still, our understanding of scripture has a value. What might that value be?)

- May enable conversation when there is common faith – but be careful
- When scripture is thrown at us out of context – we can discuss full context
- Enables comfort in our own heart when we face persecution

(Question 5: One of the most visible places we might observe where people gather to advocate for life is the sidewalk in front of abortion clinics, but as we mentioned, there is a spectrum

where our gifts, talents, or calling may enable the culture of life. **Where might we get involved?)**

- Prayer Warriors
 - ➔ At the sidewalk
 - ➔ At home
 - ➔ At adoration
 - ➔ Wherever we pray
- Sidewalk counseling
- Pregnancy Resource Centers
 - ➔ Volunteer (whatever our skills, kind hands can always be put to use)
 - ➔ Donation of baby items
- Parenting support programs
- Post abortion recovery
- Crisis counseling
- Adoption centers/advocacy
- Suicide prevention organizations
- Addiction rehabilitation
- Teaching to enable the culture of life
- Advocacy for the elderly and afflicted
- First Responders
- Legal advocacy
- Media advocacy
- Political advocacy
- Fundraising
- One-on-One opportunities (family, friends, chance encounters)

Quotes:

– *John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*

Respect for life requires that science and technology should always be at the service of man and his integral development. Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person's life.

– *John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*

Not only is the fact of the destruction of so many human lives still to be born or in their final stage extremely grave and disturbing, but no less grave and disturbing is the fact that conscience itself, darkened as it were by such widespread conditioning, is finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between good and evil in what concerns the basic value of human life.

– *Saint John Paul II (3 Feb 2001)*

Never tire of firmly speaking out in defense of life from its conception and do not be deterred from the commitment to defend the dignity of every human person with courageous determination.

Final Thoughts:

During the course of our discussion today, we mentioned the importance of our awareness of the full spectrum of the cultures of life and death even though our engagement is primarily concerning only one segment of the spectrum. We also pointed out the importance of our demeanor in both word and deed as well as opportunities for us to support and encourage a culture of life.

As Saint John Paul II highlighted in his encyclical, *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.”

During our opening to the show, I related that as we engage this battle of life and death, we must also consider that there is a difference between individuals and a culture. A culture exists as long as there are hearts which believe in it and support it. A person, however, can change the direction of their heart. As hearts are changed, the direction of a culture can be influenced as well.

I can testify that I once, firmly, had both feet planted within the culture of death. It was the way I was socialized in public school, through university education, and as the result of my engagement within a secular society. Fortunately for me, God steered people into my path to help open my eyes, both physically and spiritually. It didn't happen overnight or through one conversation, it came as a result of many things, but perhaps the most important influence was loving hearts which engaged me, but did not judge me.

I can't really remember what brought me to the sidewalk the first time, but I do know the spark was a simple invitation. I'm not even sure I knew what I was to expect. I was not trained in any way. I didn't talk to anyone. I did not hold a sign. I never served as a side walk counselor. There were others who were trained to perform that function, but I suspect they came to their training initially as someone like me with simply a desire to support life. Perhaps you could say, all I was there for was to stand and pray so that a heart in turmoil might see there are other hearts who care.

By ourselves, we will not win the battle between the cultures, but as we discern how we might help, as we join hands with others, as we learn and grow, we can add to the momentum of life. Let us also keep in mind, the life we save today could be the life which saves another in a moment yet to come.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we discuss Pregnancy Resources Centers, the disinformation targeted against them and the truth of the services they provide, both before and after birth. We hope you will join us so we can all learn and prepare ourselves with the armor of truth.

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 IV: Pregnancy Resource Centers

References:

40 Days for Life

<https://40daysforlife.com/>

Pregnancy Help: 1-800-712-HELP

<https://optionline.org/>

Healing From Abortion

<http://hopeafterabortion.com/>

Suicide Prevention

<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

USCCB; (May 2016); Catechism of the Catholic Church; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/catechism/index.html>

The New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE); (9 Mar 2011); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; <http://usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>