

## **In the Heartland With Bishop Pates**

### **Restoring Our Sight**

Pope Francis from the beginning of his ministry as Successor of St. Peter has called for the reverence of human life – of the responsibility of all of us to safeguard the crown of creation – from the moment of conception until natural death.

The Pope frequently talks about an embedded world-wide culture which sustains a “throw-away” society. He spotlights the refugees escaping rampant religious persecution, hunger, inhuman oppression and war who are abandoned everywhere and ever so dramatically on the high seas. He calls our attention to the hungry millions when indeed there is the possibility of food for all. We Americans alone waste 40% of the prepared food set before us. In Laudato Si he highlights our lack of care for creation and the accompanying devastation of human ecology.

In this rampant throw-away society, Pope Francis identifies the most innocent, defenseless victims of all, unborn children, so often described as unwanted and thus prime candidates for being cast aside.

In recent reports, however, captured in videos of Planned Parenthood physicians discussing the market for tissue harvested in abortion it is held that the unborn child has certain tangible value. He or she is not to be thrown away intact but the body parts with value are to be, ironically, preserved with care while the sensitized body components are allegedly crushed with precision.

In addressing human need we recognize the value of medical science and its legitimate application in human advance. How admirable is the sharing of “human tissue” in the form of a compatible kidney freely and consciously donated to a recipient in the interest of the extension of the quality of life. Many choose to give after one’s life has naturally ended a cornea, a heart or lungs that extend the life of a fellow human.

Medical science is also experiencing tremendous development in the utilization of adult stem cells. Their use pushes forward, in a morally acceptable manner, alleviation of conditions that overcome pain and enhance the quality of life.

These examples are different, however, from an arbitrary decision to end a human life for the sake of component parts or for science. Each human life has an absolute nature. The person created is made in the image and likeness of God with an eternal destiny. Science tells us it is the same human person, often vulnerable and highly dependent in the various phases in the continuum of life, who is present from the moment of conception until natural death. Once human life becomes relative in nature, where does one stop in the determination of who lives and who dies?

Not to be overlooked are the situations where the child may be a great challenge for serious reasons for perspective parent(s). But should the response be what Pope Francis describes as an opportunity to “throw-away?” With great compassion for the birth mother and recognition of the dignity of the child, attention should be turned to the multiple thousands of couples who want to adopt a child. They wait in endless lines, with great frustration, to welcome a child into their homes where he or she will be cherished and loved. These adoptive parents are prepared to render great sacrifice in the giving of themselves for the sake of the other.

The human person, with all component, interrelated organs, is the masterful creation of a loving God. May we restore our sight and be unbending in our support and respect of each human person at every stage in that individual’s earthly journey.

### **Speaking Again**

Recently, I underwent surgery for a polyp on my vocal chords. Subsequent treatment and recovery greatly reduced my speaking ability. I was told by medical personnel that this condition would make me a “little hoarse.” Alas, it turned out to be a “big horse.”

During this time, I was assured by physicians that the voice would return. The surgeon advised me, “You must be like me with good “patients.”

As foretold, the voice has returned. The doctors predict a 98% recovery based on statistics of similar conditions.

Naturally, I am grateful to all the medical personnel for their expert care and kindness. A number of people served as my voice during this period and gave my words new quality. For this help, I am grateful. Finally, the prayers and encouragement of all, especially my brother priests, were especially heartening. Muchas gracias.