

## We are to be ‘people of life, people for life’

In the eyes of God, my life and your life are no accident. God desired for us to be conceived, God desires that we live, and God desires that we spend eternity with him.

These simple yet profound truths set the anthropological framework of the Bible — in other words, they help us see what every human person is about and where we are headed.

The prophet Isaiah was keenly aware of his personal origin in God and, indeed, his personal vocation in God, from the womb: “Before birth the Lord called me, from my mother’s womb he gave me my name.”

Isaiah’s conviction was that his life and every life, desired and brought into being by God, had a purpose in God’s plan. And in God’s plan, each life is irreplaceable.

As Jesus taught his disciples about the reign of God, one of his favorite images was the child. Children, Jesus taught, not only deserve our priority attention (along with the poor, the widow, the blind and the lame) but also have profound capacity to teach us how to live in God’s reign.

Irreplaceably precious

When his disciples argued about who among them was the greatest, Jesus took the occasion to teach them to make themselves the least, to make themselves servants of all. Placing his arms around a child, he said to them — and to

us — “Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the one who sent me.”

More than a symbolic gesture, Jesus’ embrace and his words were a vital lesson: These little ones are irreplaceably precious in God’s eyes; these little ones have priority; these little ones teach us how to grow in our relationship with the Father.

No accidents, these lives of ours, created by a loving God with magnificent precision. The care and intricacy with which each human life is created — or as Isaiah and the psalmist tell it, knitted together in our mothers’ wombs — are God’s loving work.

These basic spiritual truths — these basic human truths — bring the tragedy of abortion into sharp relief. To snuff out any life desired, created, loved and given a purpose by God is an unspeakable tragedy. To further suggest that a woman or a man has a right to end a life desired, cre-



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ated, loved and given a purpose by God is adding heartbreaking insult to mortal injury.

Moreover, to propose that coverage for abortion be mandated for all state-regulated health care plans is not only utterly indefensible — it is also a grave infringement on the rights of conscience of insurers, private employers, churches and individual citizens.

On this 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we still have our work cut out for us. This is work we must do with conviction, with enthusiasm, with unfailing perseverance, with hope and with love.

### We will never stop

We are a living witness that each life is precious, sacred, unrepeatable, irreplaceable and of infinite value to God and to us. We will never stop saying that. We will never stop reminding those we elect to office that they have a responsibility to protect human life.

We will continue to resist any and all efforts to attack our rights of conscience and our religious liberty. And as our new governor and legislators continue to ponder the very perplexing matter of the state budget,

we must remind them not to forget the poor.

The government, above all, has the responsibility to protect human life. As citizens we share a responsibility to see that the government takes care of our brothers and sisters who suffer poverty, homelessness, mental illness and the effects of old age, often on their own.

Every life is precious to God and to us, and we have a responsibility to challenge the state — and work with the state — to extend vital services to those who suffer.

### Putting beliefs into practice

Lest we make the mistake of thinking that our concerns are merely political and thus should be addressed in purely political ways, it is important for us to reflect on the many opportunities we personally encounter to show respect for human life; and we need to examine our consciences and ask all citizens of our state and coun-

### DO YOU HAVE AN INTENTION FOR ARCHBISHOP SARTAIN'S PRAYER LIST?

You may send it to him at Archbishop Sartain's Prayer List, Archdiocese of Seattle, 710 Ninth Ave., Seattle, WA 98104.

try to examine theirs.

Do we show respect for human life in every way? Do we respect individual persons and not simply human life as a concept? Do we do all in our power to support pregnant women and their families, particularly when poverty or other difficult life circumstances make their lives difficult and cause them suffering?

Do we care about the poor and help them? Do we show love to the elderly and handicapped? Do we show daily respect to friends and co-workers? Do we make fun of others? Do we hurt others in any way?

Do we seek the way of vengeance instead of God’s way of forgiveness? Do we take our responsibility as citizens seriously? Do we take time to examine issues of importance and ensure that our votes are consistent with the teachings of the Church?

Do we educate our legislators and those who seek public office about the sacredness of human life? Do we in any way think of “my rights” or “my choices” as superior to God’s ways? Do we pick and choose which teachings of the Church fit our sensibilities and which do not?

Our strong and unflagging stance in defense of human life calls us to examine ourselves daily, to change our lives, to allow the Lord Jesus to re-create us in his image.

Our strong conviction that abortion is killing innocent life comes from our belief in the sovereignty of God, the inviolability and sacredness of human life, the destiny of every human person, our love for the poor and vulnerable and our concern for the common good.

And those strong convictions urge us not simply to state our beliefs but to put them into practice, to work tirelessly, respectfully and nonviolently for an end to abortion. We are to be what Blessed John Paul II called “a people of life and a people for life.”

You and I have the responsibility and the vocation — from the womb! — to be praise of God, to live as loving creatures of God, to love and protect every human person from the moment of his or her conception to natural death, and to do everything in our power to ensure that such is the law in our country.

Please God, with your help, may it be so.

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