

The Objective Value of Human Life

Ave Maria Catholic Church, October 23, 2022 - Fr. David M Vidal

Each October, we consider more deeply why every human life is valuable and reflect on how to build a culture that protects life from conception to natural death.

This week, the respect life ministry of our parish organized a series of lectures to form our conscience on this important topic. Yesterday, we offered our Holy Hour in prayer for the unborn children and their parents. Then, this weekend, we are reflecting on the dignity of human life in all our Masses. For this reason, I will preach on ***“the objective value of human life.”***

While we are grateful for the Supreme Court’s Dobbs decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, we know there is still much to do. Abortion continues to remain legal in most areas of the country, and there is an active campaign from strong political sectors that is trying to expand the evil of abortion in our society.

We must not be complacent. The overturning of an unjust law is not the final solution to the evil of abortion. Even though we thank God that more lives can be saved in the post-*Roe* era, we must pray for our government leaders, and elect officials who will enact laws and policies that promote and protect the most vulnerable among us: *the unborn children*.

Let us put the evil of abortion in perspective.

Recently, during a speech on the Senate floor, one lawmaker wisely said: *“If you were to take or destroy the eggs of a sea turtle, the criminal penalties are severe. Why do we have laws in place that protect the eggs of a sea turtle or the eggs of eagles? Because when you destroy an egg, you are killing a preborn baby sea turtle or a preborn baby eagle.”*

Under the *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act* of 1940, deliberately destroying — or even disturbing — a bald eagle’s egg or nest carries a \$100,000 fine and a sentence of up to a year in prison for a first offense. Sea turtles are protected by the *Federal Endangered Species Act* of 1973. In Florida, any act against a sea turtle’s nest and eggs is considered a third-degree felony.

How is it that we care about bald and golden eagles and sea turtles, but we do not care about the human species? How is it that a bald eagle egg is the primary stage of life of a bald eagle bird, but a human embryo is regarded as nothing?

These absurdities can be tracked down to an evil called ***relativism***. In his 2008 visit to the *General Assembly of the United Nations*, Pope Benedict XVI denounced the evil of relativism with these words:

“The rights recognized and expounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights apply to everyone by virtue of the common origin of the person, who remains the high point of God’s creative design . . . They are based on the natural law inscribed on human hearts . . . Removing human rights from this context would mean restricting their range and yielding to a relativistic conception, according to which the meaning and interpretation of rights could vary, and their universality would be denied in the name of different cultural, political, social, and even religious outlooks.”

The solid ground of *human rights* is God’s creative act and purpose of creation. Then, God created us, human beings, and gave us intrinsic dignity. Your human rights and mine do not depend upon the will of other people. Human rights arise from our dignity as created in the image and likeness of God.

And that dignity begins from the very moment of conception. Again, let us be consistent here. If a bald eagle egg is the first stage of life of a bald eagle bird, a human embryo is the first stage of life of a human being. Saying something different is nonsense. That is the nonsense of relativism.

What is moral relativism?

Moral relativism is the theory which declares that morality is relative and subjective; it depends on me. Ethical subjectivism holds that morality is relative to individuals; cultural relativism holds that it is relative to culture. Both deny the existence of moral absolutes, of objective moral truths.

Moral relativism denies the existence of the natural law. If there is an objective order and law in creation, I must subject my thinking to that order and law, but moral relativism denies that objective order. Ultimately, moral relativism denies God and presumes to be God. A moral relativist establishes his own order and laws according to his own subjective taste and preference.

Then, someone will say that the most fundamental right is “freedom of speech” and others will say “freedom of movement.” And what about “the right to life”? If you are not alive, you can neither speak nor move.

But that lack of judgment does not stop there. Some want to preserve the environment by destroying the most precious individual in the environment: a human being. Others want to enhance social life by reducing the number of brothers and sisters, cousins, nieces and nephews, and grandchildren. They want the world to be a family by destroying family members. These and so many other acts of nonsense are rooted in moral relativism, and moral relativism is rooted in selfishness and pride.

Perhaps, our best defense against the massacre of the unborn consists in paying attention to the words of the gospel: “*Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me,*” (Matt. 18: 3-5).

We must have the humility of children and recognize the beautiful order of creation and the objective value of every human life. We must have the piety of children and praise our Good Father in heaven, who calls us and every human being from the mother’s womb to live a life of holiness and happiness for all eternity.

We must become like children, and we must welcome those children in the name of Jesus.

Let us finish this reflection with a prayer. It is the prayer with which Saint John Paul II concluded his encyclical letter on *The Gospel of Life*.

O Mary,
 Mother of the living,
 to you do we entrust the cause of life
 Look down, O Mother,
 upon the vast numbers
 of babies not allowed to be born,
 of the poor whose lives are made difficult,
 of men and women who are victims of brutal violence,
 of the elderly and the sick killed
 by indifference or out of misguided mercy.

Grant that all who believe in your Son
 may proclaim the Gospel of life
 with honesty and love to the people of our time.

Obtain for them the grace
 to accept that Gospel
 as a gift ever new,
 the joy of celebrating it with gratitude
 throughout their lives
 and the courage to bear witness to it
 resolutely, in order to build,
 together with all people of goodwill,
 the civilization of truth and love,
 to the praise and glory of God,
 the Creator and lover of life. Amen