



By Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

Preaching the Pro-Life Message

The deacon's commitment to respect and protect human life

Every Sunday, we profess our faith in God by reciting the creed that reminds us of who we are and what we believe. Sometimes, however, when life throws us a curve and we are faced with difficult personal challenges or pressure from society, we become afraid to pick up our cross and follow Jesus. While looking directly into the face of a culture of death, it's not always easy to stand up for and respect the gift of life.

As deacons, we are called to preach the truth in love — in the pulpit and in the world. We must trust the Holy Spirit to help us meet people where they are and journey with them as they move closer to Christ. Fidelity in preaching is absolutely essential in our increasingly secularized culture, where religious persecution is becoming more and more common — both violent (ISIS and Boko Haram) and nonviolent (Supreme Court decisions on marriage and gender). The atrocities of abortion and euthanasia (of children and the elderly), and the plagues of pornography and human trafficking (both billion-dollar industries) are darkening minds, hardening hearts and damaging families. If we are not faithful to our calling, the sheep will be led astray by wolves.

If we do not speak out and stand strong against the Goliath of the culture, then the government will take control away from us. In the United Kingdom, two toddlers, Charlie Gard and Alfie Evans, were euthanized by the state. A U.K. law professor said Great Britain did the right thing, and in an unbelievable statement claimed that “children do not belong to their parents. [When] a claim is made that parents have rights over their children, it is important to step back and examine the language used. We need to remind ourselves that parents do not have rights regarding their children, they only have duties, the principal duty being to act in their children's best interests.”

The Church teaches that all “human life must be respected

and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person — among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2270). This is not a suggestion but a fulfillment of what it means to follow Christ.

In our battle to preserve and defend the rights of all human beings to exist, let us equip our preaching with the weapons of strength, love and wisdom in the Spirit. Our strength, which comes from God, is rooted in love and gives us the faith and courage to cast out the demons of fear and doubt while being both sensitive and open to those who have participated in acts

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against life. “For the judgment is merciless to one who has not shown mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment” (Jas 2:13).

Killing human beings can never be an answer to suffering, no matter how great that suffering may be. A truly compassionate response to a mother who has found out that her child has a genetic illness or to the elderly person who has a terminal disease is not to kill them, but to create a society that welcomes and cares for them: mother, child and grandparent. We must work to create a society that values all human life and does not seek the easy way out through the taking of innocent life.

In this busy world that numbs us and lulls us into complacency, it is good for us to be shocked by what we see: to stand still and take a long, hard look at what the culture is truly saying to us. We must strive to live with Christ in the heart of God and, through courageous preaching, share the sweetness of the Father's merciful love and the awesome gift of life. **TD**

DEACON HAROLD BURKE-SIVERS serves at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Portland, Oregon.