

Chaplain's Bulletin November 6, 2022



Dear Folks,

If we want people to think something they haven't thought before, we need to tell people something they haven't heard before. This is about approaching people from a different angle. What do you think?

Arguments from a Pro-abortion Person to Convince an Anti-abortion Person to Become Pro-abortion

Now that Roe v. Wade has been overturned, the future of abortion will be greatly affected by the work of legislating, and how people can persuade others. Some might call me a traitor for giving this to the other side, but in the interest of elevating the conversation I think it is worth doing.

There are, of course, some techniques guaranteed not to work. Slogans like “no uterus, no opinion” are going to accomplish nothing. Anti-abortion people believe they are defending basic human rights, and no where else do people accept the notion that you must be personally involved or effected to defend human rights. Besides, they would just respond, “already born, no opinion.” Likewise, accusing people of forcing their religious beliefs on others will make no sense to them. First of all, there are Christians, Jews and atheists who think it is wrong to kill human beings before they are born. Furthermore, the Catholic Church forbids kidnapping and armed robbery, and I haven't heard anyone (yet) say we should repeal the laws against kidnapping or armed robbery in the name of separation of church and state. Accusing pro-lifers of not caring about those who are born is also futile: it is so contrary to our experience we can't begin to take it seriously. So many pro-life people are doing wonderful things to help all sorts of people (and imagine how much more we could do if we didn't have to expend so much time and energy on this issue).

One needs to do one of two things: either convince them that an unborn child is not a live human being with a right not to be killed, or that the mother has a right to kill the child rather than carry him or her a little longer.

To make the case that an unborn child, a fetus, is not a living human being worthy of protection, it will do no good to just refer to him or her as a clump of cells. They have heard too many quotes from embryology textbooks saying when the egg is fertilized a new human life begins, and they've seen too many of those high-tech pictures of fetuses, and they are so beautiful. Many have turned away from abortion just by seeing their babies on ultrasound. The argument about viability is not going to be impressive either. No one had shown a basis the principle that being dependent makes one less of a person. In fact, usually being more helpless generally increases the duty to defend and care for someone.

People have put forward the argument that even if fetuses are living human beings, one can't oblige their mothers to carry them, just as one can't oblige someone to give a lifegiving blood or kidney donation, but there are a couple of problems with that position. First, abortion is not just a matter of not helping, but of actively killing. A counterpoint to the blood donor analogy has been suggested: imagine taking your boat out several miles from shore, and you realize that a toddler has wandered into your boat and hid. You have a choice: put up with the toddler on your boat until you get back to shore or pick him up and throw him overboard. Would you say that one is entitled to throw the toddler overboard because one cannot be obliged to help someone else? There is another issue: do parents have obligations to their children that other relationships do not carry? I think many would say yes. The case would have to be made that one's right not to help another is so strong that it entitles one to kill someone rather than be forced to help. There is another concern: it has

generally been understood that parents have responsibility to their children that people in general don't have toward strangers. Parents can be prosecuted for neglecting their children. What is the future of civilization if that principle is rejected? It will not be enough simply to keep repeating that bodily autonomy is important. One needs to make a case that it entitles one to kill an innocent human being. If you can make a convincing case for that, you have a chance of turning the tide.

We pro-life people are not going away, and we are nowhere near running out of motivation. More are joining the movement all the time. If you want to give us second thoughts, you will need to tell us something we haven't heard before.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim