

Youth and the Death Penalty

The following is from a homily given on August 11, 2010 by Galveston-Houston Archbishop Emeritus Joseph A. Fiorenza at the Mass given at the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities' annual Diocesan Pro-Life Leadership Conference.

One of the encouraging signs in the Pro-Life movement is the large number of young people who are engaged in the battle to protect all human life from conception to natural death. Young people understand the biological truth that when the ovum is fused with the sperm a new life begins, a totally new entity exists separate from the mother and this new entity is a human life. Young people know this scientific fact and they see through the charade of those who ignore this scientific truth or try to minimize it as only a potential human life.



With their characteristic enthusiasm, our youth have been a powerful force in the Pro-Life Movement and they also understand that since all human life comes from the creating hand of God, it is sacred. They believe that only God has complete dominion over human life and that the Pro Choice lobby has it all wrong to claim that reproductive rights or the right to control one's body gives the right to abort a child. They are convinced that the God who gives life is the only One who has the right to decide when life should end. In other words, young people strongly oppose abortion as well as capital punishment.

These same young people do not understand the disconnect they observe in some of Pro-Lifers who are not completely Pro-Life. They are puzzled by those who work tirelessly to oppose abortion but who also oppose capital punishment. It is confusing to them that some Pro-Lifers do not recognize God absolute sovereignty over all life: the innocent baby in the womb as well as the person who has committed a heinous crime. Our youth have taken seriously the teaching of Pope John Paul and Pope Benedict that today capital punishment is not necessary to protect the public from dangerous criminals and it is rarely if ever justified.

Young people think it strange that all in the Pro-Life movement are not completely Pro-Life. They see through efforts to justify their lack of opposition to capital punishment by saying abortion is always wrong, but it's possible that in some very rare cases capital punishment would be acceptable, even though the Popes said one cannot imagine it being justified today.

The Pro-Life movement will be stronger and more effective if all those dedicated to abolition of abortion would follow the lead of young people and also work for the abolition of the death penalty. All in the Pro-Life movement, adults and young, must be united in proclaiming God's absolute authority over all life, from conception to natural death.