

## WHY ARE WE PRO-LIFE?

Excerpts from an article from Fr. Peter Harman, Diocesan Delegate for Health Care Professionals and Pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Effingham. (March 3, 2024)

**“As had been predicted last fall, the Illinois Assembly is introducing legislation to allow assisted suicide. Why does it matter if assisted suicide is legalized if I do not participate in it? There are many dangers to all individuals in making assisted suicide acceptable in our broader society. A society in which the elderly, disabled, and extremely sick are pressured to die is a society in which the value of human life is conditional. The message is that life is valuable and worthy of respect only so long as one experiences a certain level of pleasure and contributes something to others. This leads to what Pope St. John Paul II called the “culture of death” and what Pope Francis has called the “throwaway culture.” When we witness the breakdown of respect for human life all around us, especially in countries and states where actions like abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia are permitted and promoted, it is not fallacious to recognize this development as morally evil and opposed to human flourishing and God’s design.**

**In 1973 that the legalization of abortion, frequently argued for extreme situations, has led to the cultural phenomenon of “abortion on demand” for any reason. It would be naïve to assume that the same pattern for undermining the objective dignity of human life would not lead to similar dismissal of the poor, handicapped, sick, and suffering. In places where assisted suicide has been legalized and is practiced, the cultural situation has deteriorated to the point of allowing death inducing medications to be given to those who are unable to grant their desire or consent to such practices.**

In terms of just access to healthcare, once the precedent of assigning value to one’s life is established, government aid resources and insurance coverage will naturally begin to decrease for those whose conditions are not “worth treating.” In Canada people with terminal illnesses have been denied various treatments but offered assisted suicide instead. Sadly, this phenomenon of death in place of care would have a disproportionate effect on the poor. The U. S. Catholic Bishops have pointed out:

Even health care providers’ ability and willingness to provide palliative care such as effective pain management can be undermined by authorizing assisted suicide. Studies indicate that untreated pain among terminally ill patients may increase and development of hospice care can stagnate after assisted suicide is legalized. Government programs and private insurers may even limit support for care that could extend life, while emphasizing the “cost-effective” solution of a doctor-prescribed death. The reason for such trends is easy to understand. Why would medical professionals spend a lifetime developing the empathy and skills needed for the difficult but important task of providing optimum care, once society has authorized a “solution” for suffering patients that requires no skill at all? Once some people have become candidates for the inexpensive treatment of assisted suicide, public and private payers for health coverage also find it easy to direct life-affirming resources elsewhere (USCCB, “To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide”).

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From an article by Fr Peter Harman (Sept. 10, 2023)

In recent weeks several people have offered questions regarding options for couples who find themselves unable to conceive children. In short, those procedures which help couples to conceive a child without bypassing the natural goodness of the sexual act are considered good. These would include hormonal treatments offered to help the woman's reproductive cycle. The short way to remember is "assist not replace" conception.

In vitro fertilization, (IVF) in which children are brought into being in glass dishes, is probably the most common approach for overcoming infertility in our day. There are grave problems with IVF, and Catholics should avoid ever using it. Catholics should also understand why it is wrong: First, it goes against God's plan for the manner in which children are to come into the world. Children are to be conceived exclusively through the physical expression of love between a husband and wife. In IVF, technicians, rather than the husband and wife, perform the actions that bring about life in a glass dish in a laboratory where the reproductive cells of the husband and wife are mixed together. Second, embryos, tiny human beings, are almost always conceived in multiple conceptions and later killed through this procedure. Doctors choose only the healthy embryos to place in the womb. The "leftover" ones are either killed or are experimented upon. Some are frozen in liquid nitrogen for future implantation or experimentation. This is no way to treat human beings, even tiny embryonic ones. Third, it is common that more than one embryo is placed in the uterus with the hope that at least one will implant, come to term and be born. Often only one baby is desired and so the choice will be made to save one and terminate the others. Or, if they are not all healthy, embryos who are not developing well are eliminated. Fourth, IVF treats children as though they were commodities to be produced for adult needs. IVF also leads to genetic engineering, "designer babies," and the view that "leftover" embryos can serve as material for research scientists. In vitro fertilization does harm to the marital union and to the couple themselves. It also leads to the death of embryonic human beings who, for whatever reason, are not desired after they have been engendered. Despite the good and holy desire to have children, the ends do not justify the means in the case of IVF. Sadly, the details of these procedures are not always fully explained to couples who are facing the struggle of infertility.

It is crucial to remember that the children conceived through IVF are precious in the sight of God, as are all children. Even though the means by which they were conceived are immoral (as are some other means by which children are engendered, such as sexual activity outside of marriage), they are loved by God and should be loved and cherished by all as well. It is important to keep in prayer those couples who are struggling to begin their families.