

What it Means to Be an Abortion Abolitionist

by

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I was ordained to ministry in 1988, and abortion immediately became a prominent theme of my preaching. Yet serving a large and varied congregation in New York City, my duties encompassed all the pastoral needs of individuals and families. My time was divided between ministering to the needs of the congregation, doing Bible teaching, and doing pro-life work.

But after almost five years of parish ministry, I reached a point where I could not in conscience go on with life "business as usual." I had to devote every moment of my time, every inch of my attention, and every ounce of my strength, to ending the holocaust of abortion. It was clear to me that every age of history is judged by the response of the People of God to the prevailing moral crisis of that age, and that in our age, that crisis is abortion. With the blessing of Cardinal John O'Connor, I began working full-time in the pro-life arena in 1993. I did not do this because I "wanted to do my thing." Nor did I do it because I was asked to. I did it, and continue to do it, because when another human being is about to be killed and we can do something about it, we are obliged to act.

The unprecedented tragedy we face with abortion in America and worldwide demands a full-time response. Working to stop the killing of thousands of innocent children every day is not something to be squeezed in when we have a moment. In matters of life and death, we drop everything else, no matter how lofty the work, to respond to the most fundamental demands of justice.

Abortion has been trivialized and there has been a colossal failure to stop it. Both in the wider society and in the Church, there has been a systemic anemia in our response to abortion. Fighting this evil is regarded as a hobby for those who feel so inclined. It is seen as an avocation rather than a vocation. Whether we look at the Church, at government, or at any facet of the pro-life movement, we see a chronic lack of the resources — in the form of money and people — needed to end this tragedy. We have failed to allocate to this effort the resources it takes to win.

This is no time to retreat or to make excuses. We are to give our lives for our brothers and sisters, no matter what anyone says or thinks about it. We are to witness to the Church and to the world that this is the priority of the day, and there is no way to give that witness other than to make it our priority.

To be an abortion abolitionist is to resolve that our fight against abortion will end either when abortion ends or when our life ends. It is to acknowledge no other alternative. It is to count no cost, spare no sacrifice, and allow no compromise. It is, ultimately, to realize that to fail to intervene for our brothers and sisters about to be butchered would not be merely to fail in a duty; it would be a betrayal of everything we are called to be.

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