

PRAYER AND PREACHING RESOURCES

Sermon Suggestions

The church congregation looks to their leader for truth in God's message. Pastors must be bold and courageous in preaching the message of life. As you discern your message for the sermon, consider the following suggestions from Fr. Frank Pavone³². People need to know:

- **We are in this together.** There are lots of strong emotions about abortion. The attitude to take and convey is *You are not my enemy. We are in a painful situation together, and we need to help each other out of it.* Remember that you are dealing with good people who have pain, not with enemies.
- **To be pro-life is to be pro-woman.** Pro-lifers do not love the child without loving the mother; you cannot separate the two. To harm the child is to harm the mother. But the authentic pro-life message is a message of equality. It is a challenge to *expand* the circle of our love, hospitality, and protection. This insight helps resolve the conflict of the "conflicted middle" who see the evil of abortion but think it benefits women.
- **To oppose abortion does not mean to oppose those who have them.** Pro-life preaching should include the healing and forgiveness the Church and pro-life movement offer to those who have been involved in an abortion.

The Church offers the perfect spiritual and psychological balance that is necessary. The last thing post-abortive individuals need to hear is, "What you did is no big deal." The nature of post-abortion grief is that the individual involved in the abortion has begun to realize precisely what a big deal it was! Healing can begin when they break out of denial and call the evil what it is. The clear preaching of the Church about abortion helps her to do this.

At the same time, the other line those involved in an abortion don't need to hear is, "You are rejected; there is no hope." The Church contradicts that despair with the clear message of forgiveness.

- **Abortion is their business.** The key challenge in presenting our people with the abortion issue is not so much convincing them that it is wrong, but rather convincing them that it is *any of their business*. Some see abortion as wrong, but as a private wrong, with which it is *none of their business* to interfere. People understand that we have to intervene to help the poor, the AIDS victim, the drug addict, and the victim of crime and war. When someone's choice destroys or threatens someone else's life, that is everyone's business. It is the business of love which intervenes to save our brothers and sisters in need. There, precisely, is the reason it is both our

business and our privilege to work to stop abortions.

- **There is something that they can do to stop abortion.** If we awaken people to the evil but do not guide their response, they will either end up depressed or perhaps act irresponsibly. The problem is not that there is nothing that can be done, but that there are not enough people doing the legal, peaceful, and effective activities they can to end abortion. Present such options in the homily and follow up on them through well-organized parish respect life programs. See page 4.3 for ways your church can stop abortion.

Here are a few example sermon outlines from the Human Coalition Church Toolkit. Visit their website www.humancoalition.com to become a rescue partner, download the full tool-kit and sign up for updates.

PASTOR
HAND-
OUT
PROVIDED

Imago Dei ³³

(Genesis 1:26; Psalm 139:13-16;
Proverbs 24:10-12)

The Problem

- 1 million children are killed by abortion each year.
- It's the leading cause of death by a factor of two (heart disease and cancer kill nearly 600,000 each annually).
- One-third of the women in the Church have had an abortion.
- We don't understand the Imago Dei.
 - Genesis 1:26—What does it mean?
 - *Tselm*—image, statue
 - *Demut*—likeness, appearance
 - We are made in some fashion to represent God in the way He made us. Humans are the only things in the created order about whom that is true. Yet we

destroy that image nearly 3,000 times a day through abortion.

- Psalm 106:35-46—God punished His chosen people for their sin, particularly for sacrificing their children to the gods of the Gentiles. He is righteous and must punish the United States as well for sacrificing 60+ million of our children since 1973.
- Psalm 139:13-16
 - Intimate, personal; God shapes and forms us in the womb.
 - God knows us and very intentionally created us.
- Jeremiah 1:5—God knew Jeremiah before He formed him in the womb.
- Ephesians 1:4—God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him.
- We are all made very intimately, purposefully, and precisely in God's image and likeness. When we abort a child, we are destroying the very image of God and His very intentional work.

The Solution:

- The Church is the solution.
- Proverbs 24:10-12 (NASB)
 - Deliver: *hatsel*—to take from one place to another, like mail
 - Drawn/Led Away: *lequhim*—led like livestock on a lead
 - Hold Back: *tahsok*—pull back from danger
 - Stumbling/staggering: *matim*—falling over, no control, tripping
- It is a command to the Church to deliver those being led away toward death. To take them from the path toward death, to life. When we think about abortion, these children are being delivered from their mother's womb to death.
- We are also called to hold back those who