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The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

Leadership Briefing

By Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Human life should be respected, protected in all circumstances

“Everyone is responsible for his life before God who has given it to him. It is God who remains the sovereign Master of life. We are obliged to accept life gratefully and preserve it for [God’s] honor and the salvation of our souls. We are stewards, not owners, of the life God has entrusted to us. It is not ours to dispose of” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2280).



Recently bishops throughout the United States urged Catholics, and all people of good will, to let our President and Congress know that we are opposed to any spending measures that do not protect the sanctity of human life. (See statement below.) The Hyde Amendment, which prohibits using federal funds for abortions, has been re-enacted in spending bills every year since it was first passed in 1976. Now, the powerful pro-abortion lobby and members of Congress are calling for the elimination of this Amendment and the implementation of a policy that would designate billions of taxpayer dollars for elective abortions.

Our Church vigorously opposes abortion because we believe that from the first moment of conception each human being must be recognized as having the inviolable right to life. No human law or social policy can override this most fundamental, God-given civil right. Our Church’s absolute commitment to the dignity of human life extends to other social issues as well. All forms of homicide, including infanticide (the killing of children) and genocide (the elimination of entire communities based on their religious or ethnic identities) must be strenuously opposed.

The same is true of capital punishment, which Pope Francis has declared to be “inadmissible no matter how serious the crime committed because it attacks the inviolability and dignity of the person.”

This same principle applies to all forms of euthanasia (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2276). Catholic social teaching emphasizes that “those whose lives are diminished or weakened” due to illness, disability or extreme old age “deserve special respect.” They should be helped to lead lives that are as full and dignified as possible in their diminished circumstances. Whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia (“mercy killing”) consists in putting an end to a human life. Our Church teaches that this is “always unacceptable.”

The same is true of suicide, which, tragically, is increasing in our society. According to the catechism, “Suicide contradicts the natural inclination of the human person to preserve and perpetuate his life. It is gravely contrary to the just love of self. It likewise offends love of neighbor because it unjustly breaks the ties of solidarity with family, nation, and other human societies to which we continue to have obligations” (#2281).

Especially in the United States today, when many states have adopted laws that permit—even encourage—suicide assisted by physicians and loved ones, the Church is required to speak out and to declare that “suicide is contrary to love for the living God.”

In all these cases, the Church and all of us individual Christians have a moral responsibility to show compassion, understanding and loving support for our sisters and brothers who are under so much emotional pain and stress that they seriously consider taking a human life—their own, that of an unborn child or a loved one who is in terrible pain.

We cannot imagine how much intense pressure is placed on those who contemplate abortion, euthanasia or suicide. What’s needed above all is the unconditional love and mercy that our Lord Jesus Christ offers to all who are burdened in any way. His love is needed, often desperately, to break through the barriers of guilt and shame that surround our brothers and sisters who have given up hope and are seeking a way out of overwhelming crises in their lives.

Our Church’s absolute commitment to the dignity of life is not meant to “lord it over” women and men who are suffering. Instead, it serves as a call to the rest of us—spouses, family members and friends, neighbors and fellow parishioners, and all people of good will—to reach out to those who are suffering and offer both words of encouragement and a helping hand wherever possible.

In order to be signs of the unconditional love and mercy of God, we uphold the conviction that “human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator who is its sole end.” Because we know how much God loves each and every one of us, we affirm that “God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstances claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2258).

Pope Francis has said, “Abortion is never the answer that women and families are looking for. There is a need to create spaces, places and networks of love, to which couples can turn, and to spend time assisting these families.” We are stewards, not owners, of God’s gift of life. Let’s do everything in our power to nurture, protect and defend this gift—from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death!

+Charles C. Thompson

Catholics sign petition in support of Hyde Amendment

NEWARK, N.J. (CNS)—Taxpayer-funded abortion “represents a failure to recognize the sanctity of human life and promotes a culture in which human life in its most vulnerable moment is perceived as disposable,” said Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark.

A federal budget that “would eliminate” the long-standing bipartisan Hyde Amendment is a proposal that “targets poor women as needing an expedient solution to a complex problem,” he said on July 6.

Cardinal Tobin made the comments following moves by President Joe Biden and members of Congress to leave the Hyde Amendment out of spending bills.

Echoing Cardinal Tobin’s sentiments, Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson on July 12 noted that “Hyde has been re-enacted in spending bills every year since it was first passed. Now, the powerful pro-abortion lobby and members of Congress are calling for the elimination of this Amendment and the implementation of a policy that would designate billions of taxpayer dollars for elective abortions.

“Pope Francis has said, ‘Abortion is never the answer that women and families are looking for. There is a need to create spaces, places and networks of love, to which couples can turn, and to spend time assisting these families,’ ” Archbishop Thompson continued.

“It is crucially important that we send a strong, clear message that the Hyde Amendment has far-reaching public support and should not be repealed,” Cardinal Tobin said. “Members of Congress need to hear from as many of us as possible.”

Both prelates urged Catholics to go to www.NoTaxpayerAbortion.com and join them in signing this petition as soon as possible to send “an urgent message” to Congress to keep the Hyde Amendment.

“I am deeply concerned that the proposed federal budget would eliminate the Hyde Amendment, which, for 45 years, has prohibited the use of federal funds for abortion,” Cardinal Tobin said. “The Hyde Amendment is credited with saving the lives of millions of children.”

Like Cardinal Tobin and Archbishop Thompson, Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori called on the faithful in his archdiocese on July 12 to sign the online petition calling on Congress to retain Hyde.

“During this critical time, let us join in prayer for the protection of the unborn,” Archbishop Lori said. “But let us also, as citizens and believers, raise our voices to protect the most defenseless of human beings, the unborn child. Let us stand together in promoting the sanctity of life.”

Hyde first became law in 1976 to prohibit federal funds appropriated through the Labor Department, the Health and Human Services Department and related agencies from being used to cover abortion or fund health plans that cover abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the woman would be endangered.

Hyde has been re-enacted in spending bills every year since it was first passed.

On May 28, Biden unveiled his proposed budget of \$6 trillion for fiscal year 2022 and did not include the Hyde Amendment. His proposal would include spending to improve and modernize the nation’s infrastructure, provide free pre-K and community college, and increase domestic programs aimed at boosting public health and helping the poor.

Hyde also was excluded in the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act that Biden signed into law on March 11. The U.S. bishops called its absence “unconscionable.”

Biden, a Catholic, who for his years in the Senate strongly supported Hyde, now backs back repeal of the amendment as does Vice President Kamala Harris.

When Biden released his proposed budget without the Hyde Amendment, Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Mercy Sister Mary Haddad, the Catholic Health Association’s president and CEO, issued separate statements praising his proposal for a number of provisions to help vulnerable Americans, but called it remiss in leaving out Hyde, which protects the most vulnerable—the unborn.

In recent weeks, 22 attorneys general signed a joint letter to House and Senate leaders asking them to retain the Hyde Amendment in any budget measure that passes. House GOP leaders have urged Congress to make Hyde permanent.

In the meantime, the House Committee on Appropriations was prepared to mark up two appropriations bills without Hyde-related provisions: the Financial Services and General Government bill, which funds the Treasury Department, the Judiciary, the Executive Office of the President and other federal agencies, including the Small Business Administration; and the State and Foreign Operations bill, which funds the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other international programs and activities.

On July 9, Students for Life of America and Students for Life Action participated in “Save Hyde” rallies alongside Democrats for Life of America in Philadelphia and in Akron, Ohio, to urge U.S. Reps. Brendan Boyle, D-Pa., and Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, and all Democrats to support the Hyde Amendment.

“One thing that has been consistently true about abortion policy is that people, whether self-described as pro-life or pro-choice, do not want to pay for abortion across the board,” said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America and Students for Life Action.

“Yet President Biden and his party have prioritized the deliberate ending of preborn life like no other administration in history,” she added in a July 8 statement. “Maybe he should refresh his memory on his past position [supporting Hyde].”

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

Sometimes we hear people say, “You Catholics do not accept abortion; it’s a problem with your faith”. No, the problem is pre-religious. Faith has nothing to do with it. It comes afterwards, but it has nothing to do with it. The problem is a human problem. It is pre-religious. Let’s not blame faith for something that from the beginning has nothing to do with it. The problem is a human problem. Just two questions will help us understand this clearly. Two questions. First: is it licit to eliminate a human life to solve a problem? Second: is it licit to hire a killer to resolve a problem? I leave the answer to you. This is the point. Don’t blame religion for a human issue. It is not licit. Never, never eliminate a human life or hire a killer to solve a problem.

Abortion is never the answer that women and families are looking for. Rather, it is fear of illness and isolation that makes parents waver. The practical, human and spiritual difficulties are undeniable, but it is precisely for this reason that a more incisive pastoral action is urgently needed to support those families who accept sick children. There is a need to create spaces, places and “networks of love” to which couples can turn, and to spend time assisting these families.



I think of a story that I heard of in my other Diocese. A fifteen-year-old girl with Down syndrome became pregnant and her parents went to the judge to get authorization for an abortion. The judge, a very upright man, studied the case and said, “I would like to question the girl”. [The parents answered:] “But she has Down syndrome she doesn’t understand”. [The judge replied:] “No, have her come”.

The young girl sat down and began to speak with the judge. He said to her: “Do you know what happened to you”. [She replied:] “Yes, I’m sick”. [The judge then asked:] “And what is your sickness?” [She answered:] “They told me that I have an animal inside me that is eating my stomach, and that is why I have to have an operation”. [The judge told her:] “No, you don’t have a worm that’s eating your stomach. You know what you have? It’s a baby”.

The young girl with Down syndrome said: “Oh, how beautiful!” That’s what happened. So the judge did not authorize the abortion. The mother wanted it. The years passed; the baby was born, she went to school, she grew up and she became a lawyer. From the time that she knew her story, because they told it to her, every day on her birthday she called the judge to thank him for the gift of being born. The things that happen in life... The judge is now dead and she has become a public prosecutor.

See what a beautiful thing happened! Abortion is never the response that women and families are looking for. (A selection from Pope Francis’ address to participants in the conference, “Yes to Life! — Taking Care of the Precious Gift of Life in its Frailty,” Saturday, May 25, 2019.)

My Prayer for You

Tender and loving Father, you are the author of all life. Teach us to be faithful guardians of the sanctity and dignity of every human being. May we work to create laws and social policies that respect life and create safe environments for women and their unborn children. We make this prayer through the intercession of Mary, our Blessed Mother, in the name of Jesus and confident that the Holy Spirit will guide us in our efforts to protect and defend all persons made in your image and likeness. Amen.

+ Charles C. Thompson