

Tell the truth in love



One of my favorite parts of Pope St. John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae* is where he addresses women who have had abortions: "The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly, what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly" (No. 99).

What an acknowledgement of the full truth! The pain and the evil. The impossible situation women can find themselves in – girls, really. Women I see coming in and out of Planned Parenthood when I do my 40 Days for Life hours in lower Manhattan are far from successful women empowered to declare their autonomy. One young woman whom I suspected had an abortion had her head buried in the chest of her friend who accompanied her. She looked like she didn't want to face life as they waited for a ride. She was a portrait in grieving.

In his encyclical, John Paul continues: "If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy, you can with sure hope entrust your child. With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life" (No. 99). This is the stuff of

practical compassion.

Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles reminded me of these words and the spirit of “The Gospel of Life” when he issued [his statement](#) on behalf of the U.S. bishops on the inauguration of Joe Biden as president. It is true that abortion is wrong. And it is true that Biden supports it and has promised to expand it with a codification of *Roe v. Wade*. This is a grave evil. But we also know that the Church hasn’t always, in its people and institutions, taught and witnessed as we ought in recent decades. I often wonder what priests and other Catholics have blessed the public positions of the likes of Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi and others.

To state that receiving Communion while giving scandal and being an abortion-supporter is blasphemy wouldn’t be weaponizing the Eucharist. It would be respecting Jesus Christ and the people piercing the Body of Christ, as we all do with our sins, in such a flagrant way. People in good conscience have come to think that the personally opposed or outright all-around support for abortion is acceptable for a baptized Catholic. We’re a far cry from the late New York Gov. Mario Cuomo trying to justify his public position.

Think of what leadership the U.S. bishops could provide if they challenged the Democratic party to make room for abortion opponents in their party. It’s the right thing that could make us better. And like Gomez and JPPI before him did, don’t simply say “no”; show all of the different resources there are available for women and explain the whys to the beautiful and courageous “yes” to life. Celebrate mothers.

The slogan “Women deserve better” should be a rallying cry for every single one of us in the Church to show love to women, to encourage men, to really present a life-giving anthropology of the human person the Catholic Church offers the world. We’ve got to stop thinking in terms of politics about abortion, and simply tell the truth in love.

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