



PRO-LIFE

By George Melendez, Council 10514 Lecturer
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The Pro-Life movement was very active last month with events all over the country. What caught my attention that brought me to today's topic and related story, were two things: the first was the article written by our Supreme Knight, Patrick Kelly, titled "What It Means to Be Pro-Life" which was printed in the Wall Street Journal on January 21, 2022.

Our Supreme Knight's message is about how faith-driven pregnancy resource centers are becoming more prominent and about the dedicated volunteers that support the Pro-Life effort. That includes the strong pro-life commitment of the Knights of Columbus that's evident no matter where you look — including in the opinion pages of one of America's leading national newspapers.

The second was Archbishop William E. Lori's homily delivered at the Pro-Life Vigil Mass on January 20, 2022 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Washington, D.C. Archbishop Lori is our Knights of Columbus Supreme Chaplain and the new chairman of the Pro-Life Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). While reading this homily, there was a part that brought to mind a story I'd read about elsewhere. I'll share that story with you in a minute.

In his homily The Supreme Chaplain gives a salute to Pro-Life Ministries. He talks about a growing ministry, "Walking with Moms in Need", sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This parish-based ministry helps open the eyes of parishioners to pregnant and parenting moms in their local communities. It enables parishioners to know these mothers, to listen to them, and along the way, to help them obtain the necessities of life for themselves and their children, including medical care as well as emotional and spiritual support. He says "Perhaps it was Mary, who first exemplified 'Walking with Moms in Need' when she learned from the Angel that her cousin Elizabeth — well-past the age of child-bearing — was in her 6th month and Mary hastened to her side. Mary's journey through the hill-country was a dangerous trek of some 90 miles. But she went the distance to reach out in love to Elizabeth in her hour of need. When Mary arrived, the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy, and filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth cried out words that we repeat every day: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb', viz., Jesus!"

Archbishop Lori also gives us, the Knights a shout-out in his homily with the following, "Let me also raise up the ministry of pro-life pregnancy centers in the United States, centers that welcome women in crisis with compassionate counselling, and through ultrasound technology — often supplied by the Knights of Columbus — enable them to glimpse the humanity of their unborn children. Most of the time, these mothers elect to bring their babies to term because they have seen their features and heard their heartbeat."

We've enjoyed many of these successes right here from our own SMDM Respect Life Ministry chaired by Patti Gloekler.

I want to highlight two quotes. The first quote is from our Supreme Chaplain's homily where he talks about Dobbs vs. Jackson giving the Supreme High Court an opportunity to undo the grave injustice it did in 1973 with Roe vs. Wade AND about making it clear that choosing life shouldn't hinder happiness or burden society. We're all aware that since that tragic decision, more than 60 million innocent lives have been taken.

The quote is " . . . choosing life creates a society that looks to the future with hope, a society where a woman is never forced to choose between her future and the life of her child!"

The second is from our Supreme Knight's Wall Street article where he talks about what motivates pro-life volunteers and how they are driven by a deep affection for mothers and children.

He says, "Being pro-life isn't an abstract concept; it's deeply personal and inherently connected with those they serve. They believe that every life, every soul has worth and value."

For the purpose of the story I'm about to relate, I combined parts of these quotes into the following: A woman should never be forced to choose between her future and the life of her child, because every life, every soul has worth and value.

The story that came to mind is about a woman named Emilia who was going through a difficult and life-threatening pregnancy. She had been advised to get an abortion. She was challenged to choose between her own life and that of her baby, but her deep faith did not allow Emilia to choose abortion. Deep in her heart she had to be ready to make this sacrifice for the baby she was carrying. Friends of Emilia said she was depressed by the insistence of her first doctor, that she have an abortion. So, she and her husband started looking for another doctor.

Along the way they made a bold decision that, regardless of everything, their conceived baby was to be born. They ultimately found another doctor and he confirmed that there was a risk of complications during childbirth, including Emilia's death. However, he did not suggest an abortion.

Emilia had a bad pregnancy. She spent most of her time in bed, she was very weak and had less strength than usual. Nonetheless, on May 18, 1920, she gave birth to her second son, and he was named after his father Karol.

As he grew, he became well versed in the art of acting and supposedly had a great talent for Karaoke. His friends encouraged him to pursue an acting career. However, he had other talents and gifts as well because when called to pursue an acting career or go into the seminary, he chose the seminary. There were many challenges in the life of this priest who ultimately became Pope John Paul II. We all know and recognize the many blessings that we, the Catholic Church and the entire world have received as a result of this one life and the decision of his mother Emilia.

Think about the impact that an additional 60 million lives may have had on the world.

What might have happened? Cures for cancer and Alzheimer Disease. Cures for debilitating illnesses or infirmities that may have taken a loved one from us much too soon. Maybe one of the 60 million could have ended this COVID pandemic much quicker or prevented it in the first place. Maybe a highly skilled diplomat able to de-escalate the current situation in the Ukraine. Or maybe, just maybe we may have had another saint or two.

As we think about what might have been, we need to continue to move forward with hope, courage, and compassion, along with the principles of our order charity, unity and fraternity, sure in the conviction, "that here on earth, God's work must truly be our own." (JFK Inaugural Address).