

The Annunciation of our Lord, A ✕ D 2010

Luke 1:26-38

In the Name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1 Everyone is pro-life, which goes to show that titles are irrelevant. Even those who support abortion, the obvious taking of life of the pre-born, are still pro-life. They may not be pro-all-life, but they are fervent defenders of life: their own lives. The problem with abortion advocacy is its adamant refusal to surrender any life of the mother-to-be. If a baby would impinge on her comfort, her lifestyle, her education, her life, it is best—they contend—to abort the baby. Mom's life takes precedence.

2 The problem runs deeper than the camp of the pro-abortionists. Many of those opposed to abortion are only slightly less selfish than those in favor of abortion. They will protest the taking of the live of a baby not yet born, but they are awkwardly silent when it comes to advocating in favor of receiving that gift of life naturally. Even among the anti-abortion crowd runs a strong sentiment of anti-baby, pro-childlessness that would contracept in order to thwart God's procreative design for sex. So they pop pills as if fertility were a disease to be treated, or insert devices that prevent the body's natural mechanisms from functioning properly. Contraception lets us treat sex selfishly; it lets us hold something back from the act of sex. It is cut from the same selfish cloth out of which we have fashioned the infanticide, politely called abortion. Pro-contraception is just anti-conception, pro-my-own-life, opposition to God's gift of life. Contraception is like bulimia, wanting the pleasures of food without the gift and consequences of nourishment.

3 The problem is more than bed-sheet deep. This wanton selfishness infects your whole life. The first question you are prone to ask is "What good does this do me?" God values marriage not only because therein He gives husbands and wives a picture of His selfless love for His Church, but also because in the marital sexual union, He gives His creatures a glimpse into His creative activity. But your inclination is to reject any of God's gifts—children or otherwise—for the burden they will cause, which is just to say that they might affect your standard of living. Just as you are unwilling to set aside selfish pleasures for the sake of receiving children as God

would give them, so you are set against letting your comfortable life be cramped by a full tithe, a full ten percent of your income in the offering plate, or a generous contribution to the poor.

4 But the call from God is not for a part of your life, not for some compartment thereof. It is for your entire life. Repent of half-hearted devotion. Repent of wanting to receive only some of God's gifts. Repent of supposing your own needs and wants govern your decision-making. Repent of viewing life—yours or anyone else's—as a burden to be lessened.

5 Repent and rejoice because there was one who was more open to life than most, one who willingly set aside her own self-interest for the sake of her neighbors, one who endured personal sacrifice and shame for the sake of the child in her womb. Learn from the Virgin Mary all you need to know about the Christian life: "Let it be to me according to your word." So she received the gift she was given and displays the nature of the Christian life to receive God's gifts, to live only from His word, to take comfort in Him alone. Rejoice that the Lord chose a willing recipient to bear the Incarnate God, the Word of God in the flesh, in her womb.

6 There, in the womb of the Virgin, God took human flesh. From this point on, she may rightly be called the mother of God because that which lives inside her is God. He took full human nature. He did not arrive in any superhuman way, but in the ordinary way that all humans are born, except that He was not conceived by the union of man and woman. Nor, because He redeemed human flesh by taking human flesh, was her pregnancy fraught with complications and pain. But He was human in every way just as you have been and are. God was an embryo, a blastocyst, a zygote, a fetus, an infant, a toddler, a little boy, a man. In fact, He was more human than you are because His humanity was unspoiled by sin, unbroken, uncorrupted like yours is.

7 This child, nine months from Gabriel's visit, nine months after the beginning of His Incarnation, would be born. And thirty-three years after that, He would die on the cross. His death would be the crushing blow to the serpent's head, the stinging defeat dealt to the devil. But even now, even at Gabriel's word, the baby spoken into her womb by the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of the promise.

8 Because you are so self-interested, Jesus frees you from yourself. By claiming you to be a child of God in Holy Baptism, He sets you free from concerning yourself with maintaining your

day-to-day life. Since you are now a beloved child of God, He concerns Himself with your well-being so you may concern yourself with the well-being of those around you. God is eminently pro-life, so much so, that He gave His Son Jesus over to death to give you life. And He continues to pour His life into you. What can be more pro-life than this: Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, promised the adult Son of the Virgin and the eternal Son of God, will live forever. Receive the life God has for you and the forgiveness won for you.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Jeff Hemmer