



HEALING THE CULTURE

changing the way people think about life

Respect Life Sunday Talk

“Before You Were Born”

7:00 minutes

Close your eyes for a moment, and think back as far as you can remember. Think way back. *(pause)* No... farther than that.

Do you remember the day you were conceived and began your life as a single-celled zygote (*pronounced zie-got*)? Do you remember when your heart began to beat at 21 days after fertilization? Or when your brain began functioning at 40 days after conception? Do you remember the day you were born?

It would be remarkable if you answered “Yes” to any of these questions. And yet, God remembers and cherishes each of these moments. You were truly *you* at all of these moments, and God *knew* you. He *intended* you. He *loved* you. Jeremiah 1:5 tells us: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

It’s easy to miss the real value that human beings have before we are born. From a scientific point of view, all that’s occurring is physical growth and functional development. *Our* embryonic development is no more remarkable than that of any *other* animal. This narrow view of the human person prompted the Australian bioethicist, Peter Singer, to argue that “the life of a newborn baby is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee.”

This narrow view is also used to justify the killing of human beings before they are born. But science is blind to the transcendental mystery that occurs in the womb. Listen to what the Bible reveals about this extraordinary stage of our lives...

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.” In biblical language, when God “knows” someone, it doesn’t mean that He recognizes or understands that person. It means that He intimately loves and unites Himself to that person. We hear Mary use the word “know” in the same way when she expresses astonishment at the angel’s claim that she will give birth to a child. Mary exclaims, “How can this be when I have not yet *known* man?” In other words, “How can I be pregnant when I have not yet intimately loved my husband in the one-flesh union?” God is using the most intimate term of uniting love to describe His relationship with us while we are still being formed in the womb.

Why would God love us like this when we are tiny embryos? The answer can be found in the next verse of Jeremiah.

“Before you were born I consecrated you.” To consecrate means to sanctify or make something holy by setting it apart from what is ordinary, and dedicating it to a particular purpose. But more than this, it means that the consecrated object actually takes on that

dedicated purpose as an essential characteristic.

Consider how we use the word “consecrate” during the Eucharistic mystery. When the priest *consecrates* the bread and the wine during Mass, he sets it apart from ordinary bread and wine so that God can make it holy by dedicating it to the purpose of ultimate love. In so doing, God causes the bread to take on the essence of Jesus Himself.

So what does God consecrate *us* to before we are born? Genesis 1:27 says, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him.” Now, to be made in God’s image means to be made to give and receive love as God gives and receives love. So before we are born, we are not only set apart for the sacred purpose of God’s love, we actually *take on* God’s love as part of our very essence. From the moment we are conceived, we are dedicated to participate in His unconditional love for all eternity.

As if that weren’t enough, there is still more going on in utero. The Jeremiah passage continues, “**I appointed you a prophet to the nations.**” Jeremiah was to become a great prophet. God gave him this specific assignment as a necessary and essential part of His plan for salvation. That assignment – that appointment – was made when Jeremiah was conceived. Although Jeremiah was an insignificant biological blob in the eyes of *science*, he was an unquantifiable mystery of love in the eyes of *God*.

Brothers and sisters, Peter Singer could not be more mistaken. From the moment of fertilization, human beings are *far* more valuable than a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee. Every unborn child is the image of God Himself, has been set aside for the purpose of His eternal love, and has been given a specific appointment to carry out that love on earth in a way that no one else can or ever will.

Psalm 82:3-4 instructs us to “rescue the weak and the needy.” One way you can do that is to help others understand the great value and dignity of unborn human life. Healing the Culture is a nonprofit organization that has produced all kinds of resources you can use to educate others.

At the ends of the pews you will find small cards that look like this (*hold up a sample card*). If you are seated at the end of a pew, please pass them out now. When you fill out and mail this card, Healing the Culture will send you a free pro-life resource to help teach your family, friends, and others about the sanctity of all human life. You don’t have to pay anything for this resource – it’s completely free, including the shipping. You can either fill out your card now and put it in the box at the exits on your way out the door, or mail it in later.

By participating in this simple project, you will be helping to protect those who are the weakest and most needy among us. And that, my friends, is something worth protecting.

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