

Pope Francis broaches a rare topic: abortion

Josephine McKenna Religion News Service | May. 2, 2014
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Pope Francis reiterated his strong opposition to abortion on April 25, saying it "compounds the grief of many women" already succumbing to what he called the "pressures of secular culture."

The pope's remarks, to a group of bishops from South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland, represented a departure of sorts for Francis, who has kept a relative silence on the issue as he tries to redirect the church's energies toward combating poverty and income inequality.

Francis expressed concern about the challenges the African bishops faced in their communities, from abortion and divorce to violence against women and children.

"Abortion compounds the grief of many women who now carry with them deep physical and spiritual wounds after succumbing to the pressures of a secular culture which devalues God's gift of sexuality and the right to life of the unborn," the pope said.

"The rate of separation and divorce is high, even in many Christian families, and children frequently do not grow up in a stable home environment. We also observe with great concern, and can only deplore, an increase in violence against women and children.

"All these realities threaten the sanctity of marriage, the stability of life in the home and consequently the life of society as a whole."

Only two weeks ago, the pope told members of Italy's anti-abortion movement that human life was inviolable and abortion was an "unspeakable crime."

"It must be therefore reiterated the strongest opposition to any direct attack on life, especially innocent and defenseless life, and the unborn child in the womb is the most concrete example of innocence," he said at the time.

"Let us remember the words of the Second Vatican Council: From the moment of its conception, life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes."

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