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A consistent ethic of life protects everyone -- no exceptions

by Tony Magliano

Making a Difference

A Utah woman recently was charged with six counts of first-degree murder for allegedly killing six of her newborn infants, according to The Associated Press.

Police said Megan Huntsman, 39, acknowledged that from 1996 to 2006, she suffocated or strangled the six babies, packed them in boxes, and stored them in her Salt Lake City garage, AP reports.

But if Huntsman had agreed to have an abortion just prior to giving birth to each of the six babies, she would be legally innocent of all charges.

While suffocating or strangling born babies is certainly a hideous crime, it is no more hideous than brutally dismembering unborn babies through abortion. Yet, in the United States, abortion remains legal throughout all nine months of pregnancy. (While some states ban abortions after 20 weeks, there is always an exception.)*

This is totally illogical.

As a newborn is just as much a human being as a 1-year-old child, so too is an unborn baby just as much a human being as a newborn.

So why do many nations mandate that it is seriously wrong to kill a baby after birth, but not before? Why are some lives deemed valuable and other lives deemed expendable?

The principal reason is because societies use inconsistent, politically correct, subjective reasoning instead

of a consistent, morally correct, objective reasoning that protects every single human being -- no exceptions.

This flawed reasoning allows the powerful to decide whose lives are worth protecting and whose lives are not. Thus, it threatens weaker, vulnerable people everywhere, like the unborn, war-torn civilians, the hungry, the poor and the sick.

In 1983, as head of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, championed for our time the early church's consistent pro-life ethic.

During an address at St. Louis University, Bernardin said, "The case for a consistent ethic of life -- one which stands for the protection of the right to life and the promotion of the rights which enhance life from womb to tomb ... is both a complex and a demanding tradition.

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"It joins the humanity of the unborn infant and the humanity of the hungry; it calls for positive legal action to prevent the killing of the unborn or the aged and positive societal action to provide shelter for the homeless and education of the illiterate."

In his powerful encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* ("The Gospel of Life"), St. John Paul II taught: "Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent. It cannot tolerate bias and discrimination."

Catholic social teaching calls us to especially act and speak out on behalf of the vulnerable and poor.

The late German anti-Nazi theologian Martin Niemöller, who was imprisoned in a concentration camp, wrote a highly insightful statement warning against the dangers of not speaking out. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum quotes him:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me -- and there was no one left to speak for me.

St. John Paul summed it up very well for us: "Respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life. Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness."

**This story has been updated to clarify abortion laws in the United States.*

[Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings about Catholic social teaching. His keynote address, "Advancing the Kingdom of God in the 21st Century," has been well received by diocesan gatherings from Salt Lake City to Baltimore. Tony can be reached at tmag@zoominternet.net.]

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