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My gratitude for the invitation...

Introduction

Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' clear affirmation of the right to life (3) and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, these rights - especially the right to life- have been regrettably ignored or even fervently contested in many nations since 1948, in respect to the lives of our unborn sisters and brothers. This is a tragic irony given the increasing global awareness of the urgency of human rights, including especially the rights of women and children.

The theme of my remarks today is that it is impossible that the shock to the canon and hierarchy of human rights represented by the claim of a right to destroy unborn human beings, would have only discrete consequences.

Instead, such a claim affects many other arguments about human rights and corresponding duties. It tends for example, to deny the existence of social obligations to vulnerable human beings generally.. It suggests that human life is an individual versus a relational enterprise. And it often insists that the medical community can be enlisted indifferently to heal or to kill.

In what follows, I describe some of the consequences of legalized abortion and the "logic of abortion," that we can observe after decades of experience.

A first consequence, unsurprisingly, has been the growth in the practice of abortion

Using United States data, for example, it is conservatively estimated that the numbers of abortions doubled or tripled between the period preceding the announcement of a right to abortion, and the period

immediately following.¹ Worldwide today, it is estimated that there are at least 56 million abortions annually.²

Second an increasing number of women are negatively affected.

According to well-regarded international medical literature, for example, abortion can compromise women's future healthy childbearing.³ And meta-analyses such as one published in the British Medical Journal indicate widespread moderate to severe psychological repercussions of abortion.⁴ There are spiritual consequences as well. The Catholic Church's Project Rachel Post-abortion Healing Ministry is overwhelmed with the number of women of all faiths, or none, who require assistance to ameliorate deep spiritual wounds.

I witnessed these psychological and spiritual effects first-hand during a year spent in weekly conversations with post-aborted women as a prelude to crafting a national healing program. Even those who had first expressed relief after their abortion told of the profound damage abortion caused to their relationships with men, with their born children, and upon their sense of happiness and freedom. But these women are regularly ignored, uncounted, and marginalized – by leading medical and abortion advocacy groups - in the pursuit of abortion rights.

Politically and culturally, legal abortion has become, in the minds of many, a proxy for “progress for women.” Despite opposition from a majority or large plurality of women, some governments, political parties, politicians and NGOs regularly count legalized abortion a pro-woman policy. Yet abortion advocacy has instead obscured and absorbed energy from efforts to achieve what most want and need from their governments and societies: fair educational, economic,

¹ William Robert Johnston, United States abortion rates 1960-2013, Johnston's Archive (2014), <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/graphusabrate.html>.

² The Guttmacher Institute, Fact Sheet: Induced Abortion Worldwide: Global Incidence and Trends (March 2018), <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/induced-abortion-worldwide>.

³ See e.g. Vincenzo Berghella and Jay D. Iams, Care for women with prior preterm birth, 203 Am. J of Obstetrics and Gynecology 89, and n. 37 (2010) (finding statistically significant link between prior abortion and later preterm birth, and citing a 2009 systematic review and metaanalysis concluding that a single elective termination was associated with a subsequent preterm birth odds ratio of 1.36 and more than 1 termination was associated with an odds ratio of 1.93.)

⁴ See e.g. Priscilla K. Coleman, Abortion and mental health: quantitative synthesis and analysis of research published 1995-2009, 199 The British Journal of Psychiatry 180 (2011), doi:10.1192/bjp.bp.110.07723.

employment, credit and civil rights... and laws and policies facilitating women's ability to do justice *both* to their families *and* to their work responsibilities outside the home. In other words, advocacy for legal abortion takes attention and resources away from pro-woman policies that women favour and need, as measured in empirical surveys. Furthermore, legal abortion advocacy stresses, the good of childlessness and women's absolute autonomy it undercuts legal and social attention to the social solidarity women and children need in order to thrive in our complex and competitive contemporary world.

Happily, women around the world and for over half a century have risen up to lead a wide variety of movements to end abortion, including massive efforts to assist women or girls struggling with a crisis pregnancy. Pro-life women, often moved by their religious commitments, have founded and staffed thousands of centers to help other women and families during and after pregnancy and childbirth.

Having led a woman-to-woman pro-life effort in the United States, I can personally testify both to women's frustration that the cause of legal abortion is being carried out "in women's name," and to their fervent hope to spare their daughters, sisters and friends from abortion and the world view it promotes. In 2012, I authored a brief public letter rebutting a US law insisting that the high point of women's freedom included avoiding childbearing and requiring religious institutions to provide some drugs and devices with abortifacient effects, **free** to their employees. In a brief period, with no advertising, my letter obtained 77,000 women's signatures over a period of weeks. I began to offer these women peer-reviewed research and other materials to empower them to make their voices heard, even in a media environment dramatically biased against them. The number of women who continued to respond over the last 6 years, revealed the size of the too-often "silent majority" of women who desire governmental policies supporting their ability to have and rear children, their ability to work outside the home while parenting, and the rights of all children to a dignified life. They are weary of hearing that legal abortion is a total proxy for women's freedom.

A third consequence of the movement for legal abortion includes the disproportionate suffering of the poor

In many countries where abortion is legal, poor women suffer from abortion more than the economically privileged. This occurs despite enormous and long-running state and private programs supplying free contraception directly to the poor. This is all the more tragic given how many studies show that poorer women oppose abortion more than wealthier women.⁵ The results of the legalized abortion campaign should not be surprising, given how - at the beginning of that campaign - advocates were regularly vocal about their hopes to reduce the number of births to poor women. Today, this argument is still heard occasionally.⁶

At a time when many nations are struggling to deal justly with people of every race, religion and national origin, legal abortion impedes the ethical progress of solidarity with every single person, based on the simple grounds of their membership in the human race.

A fourth consequence of the push for legal abortion is harm to the relationships between men and women

As documented by a wide variety of scholars – including abortion supporters -- when sexual relationships are separated emotionally and physically from “tomorrow”, from their link to children, to kin and even to love, they become “unbearably light” and “liquid.”⁷ Sex loses its beauty and meaning; it becomes transactional. Sexually transmitted diseases skyrocket⁸; temporary, uncommitted relationships proliferate;

⁵ Amber Lapp, Why Poor Women with Unintended Pregnancies are Less Likely to Get Abortion, Institute for Family Studies (March 10, 2015), <https://ifstudies.org/blog/why-poor-women-with-unintended-pregnancies-are-less-likely-to-get-abortions> (citing Rand Corporation and Gallup polling data).

⁶ See Emily Bazelon, The Place of Women on the Court, The New York Times, July 7, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/magazine/12ginsburg-t.html?mtrref=www.washingtonpost.com&gwh=CB0BD03A28D9C72DC0315E6AEF4B561B&gwt=pay> (An interview with leading feminist Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in which she expresses here surprise that the Court had upheld a law limiting federal abortion funding because, “Frankly, I had thought that at the time *Roe* [abortion rights case] was decided, there was concern about population growth and particularly growth in populations that we don’t want to have too many of.”). See also Ruth Marcus, I would have aborted a fetus with Down Syndrome. Women Need that Right, The Washington Post, March 9, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/i-wouldve-aborted-a-fetus-with-down-syndrome-women-need-that-right/2018/03/09/3aaac364-23d6-11e8-94da-ebf9d112159c_story.html?utm_term=.33bd0cdd40cd.

⁷ See e.g. Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (1993), 2, 27, 112, 121, 144, 156, 167, 174,175, 178-80; Zygmunt Baumann, , *Liquid Love* (2003), 42-43, 47.

⁸ Jonathan Klick and Thomas Stratmann, The effect of abortion legalization on sexual behavior; evidence from sexually transmitted diseases, 32 J. of Legal Studies 407 (2003) (finding a significant positive correlation

and marriage and parenting begin to retreat – all to the greatest detriment of poorer women especially, and to children.

A Fifth consequence: rights of conscience, religion and belief are constrained

At the inception of legalized abortion, advocates promised protection for conscientious objection, but this right are steadily being eroded or reversed. Today, objecting medical professionals and religious institutions are instead often sued by groups demanding that they perform abortions; and pro-life doctors and nurses are denied positions or licenses, despite their superior commitment to the fundamental medical ethic “always to care and never to kill.”

Sometimes advocates claim that they oppose conscientious objection because abortion can be medically necessary to save the life of a woman; but it appears that virtually all abortions are done for reasons unrelated to women’s medical health.⁹ The pressure on medical conscientious objection persists despite the fact that a large majority of medical professionals from the beginning to today, refuse to perform abortions.¹⁰ Because of the attack upon conscientious objection, persons who would otherwise count among the most sensitive to the extraordinary value of every single human life are driven away from practicing medicine, and driven away especially from caring specifically for pregnant women and their children. Also, medicine in many countries has become generally less sensitive to the dignity and value of every human life at every stage and in every condition.

between the legalization of abortion and the rise in the number of sexually transmitted infections related to increases in nonmarital sexual activity).

⁹ See Sarah Terzo, Former abortionist: abortion is never necessary to save the life of the mother, Live Action Analysis, Oct. 21, 2016, <https://www.liveaction.org/news/former-abortionist-abortion-is-never-medically-necessary-to-save-the-life-of-the-mother/>; and Akinrinola Bankole, et al., Reasons Why Women Have Induced Abortions: Evidence from 27 Countries, 24 Int’l Fam. Planning Perspectives 117, Sept. 1998 (The Guttmacher Institute), <https://www.guttmacher.org/journals/ipsrh/1998/09/reasons-why-women-have-induced-abortions-evidence-27-countries>.

¹⁰ See e.g. Gaia Pianigiani, On Paper, Italy Allows Abortions, but Few Doctors Will Perform Them, *The New York Times*, Jan. 16, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/world/europe/on-paper-italy-allows-abortion-but-few-doctors-will-perform-them.html>; Sarah Kliff, 10 Facts That Explain How America Regulates Abortion, *Vox*, Jan. 21, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/cards/abortion-policy-in-america/who-provides-abortion> (reporting that only 1720 of 834,000 U.S. doctors perform even one abortion per year; and that the number of U.S. abortion providers has decreased 38% between 1982 and 2005).

In conclusion

Predictably, the movement to legalize abortion in the name of human rights has undermined human freedom and happiness. It relies upon a vision of human beings as strictly “self-made”, and possessing the power over the life and death of others. Societies around the globe today need *rather* to affirm that every human being is made for interdependence, for solidarity within a community. The logic of abortion is a profound mistake at a time in history when we are still struggling to see one another as sisters and brothers by the simple fact of our common humanity.

Now obviously, movements urging this generation to sacrifice for the next are hard.

In the words of Hans Jonas, father of modern environmentalism:

“[O]nly *present* interests make themselves heard and felt ...But the *future* is not represented. It is not a force that can throw its weight into the scales. The “non-existent” has no lobby, and the unborn are powerless.”¹¹

But the movement to respect the lives of *both* mothers and children has persisted for over half a century despite opposition from powerful forces world-wide. It is a powerful sign of the justice of this human rights cause.

¹¹ Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (1984), 22.