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The Hope of Motherhood and the Ethical Practice of Obstetrics
The Hope of Human Rights Legislation
International Pro-life Focus on Law Makers-Is there any Hope?

This week a man was elected president of the USA who has a perfect anti life voting record. I looked forward to the day an Afro-American was elected but it is a bitter-sweet moment having a President who is anti-life. How was he elected? I think it is because he made himself Hope. So it is interesting to be addressing the question of Hope

But before I address the topic, *The International Pro-life Focus on Law Makers-Is There Any Hope*, I must first set out who are the law makers. In a democracy the law makers are first and foremost the people and the representatives and governments who the people control via the ballot box. In the USA, at national level, this primarily, though not by any means exclusively, means the president, and the Houses of Congress which both now have anti life majorities.

But looking at this definition can we really say we have any real democracies in Europe any more? I have serious questions on this and for further discussion on EU democracy check www.euroinfo.ie especially the booklet *Making Weak Democracy Weaker* (<http://www.mehr-demokratie.de/fileadmin/pdfarchiv/bund/2008-08-eu-booklet-flyer.pdf>) Increasingly, law-making is becoming the preserve of the unelected. The UN produces conventions, the WHO guidelines, the WTO deals. In the EU it is the unelected commission which formulates legislation and only then can elected parliament make amendments which will only be included if the commission and the council does not strongly object to 20% of our amendments. Today judges slip easily into law making/judicial activism, especially European Court of Justice. Numerous committees, working groups, agencies and other

unelected bodies, take part in the law-making process despite lack of mandate or even knowledge of their existence or membership. National positions of Member States whose response sensitizes to not produce on 20% original legislation. So Law makers increasingly are anyone but the citizen and their direct representatives which makes influencing the lawmaking process or even knowing *who* to influence extremely difficult, even for an MEP. I have reason to be very glad that there is a good and all powerful God watching over us, otherwise a very worrying situation would be cause for despair.

Lisbon Treaty

As an MEP I work in an environment in which I must know two languages. I do not mean English and French, but the language of the culture of life and the language of the culture of death. This is because both cultures use the same vocabulary, however attributing to it different - and often opposing - meanings. Therefore, whilst "Human Rights" for me mean the rights that accrue from the dignity and the destiny of the Human person which in turn come from God, in the other lexicon human rights are increasingly just a list demands that have gained political strength..

One morning on the radio I heard an activist saying that every child has a human right to high quality, free childcare! To me this would mean that a human baby has a natural and essential need for mothering and therefore has a right to receive that mothering from his or her mother, and that we as a society must support a mother and family so that she can nurture her child, or if this is not possible from a committed mother-substitute. To the campaigner it meant that women had a human right to be absent from their babies and in their absence to have their babies raised for the working hours of everyday in a professional accredited child care facility free of charge.

In the same way, this difference in understanding of the same vocabulary means that when I say dignity I refer to that special gift of our creator of intellect, free will and an immortal soul that separates us from the rest of His creation- because we are made in His image and likeness, that gives us an infinite value. For others the word "dignity" means "value" measured by health, mental ability, emotional happiness and other quality of life indicators and the word can be used to justify abortion, infanticide and euthanasia.

To give one more example in the area of man's duty to God or what we call religion. In the culture of life we speak of religious freedom to mean the right to worship God in the way we know to do this. in the EU anti-discrimination directive it has taken on the meaning of freedom from religion- the freedom not to see a crucifix in a hospital, the freedom to force a doctor to do an abortion against his or her conscience. The right to be hired as a religion teacher, even if you hate religion.

In the culture of life human rights have a hierarchy depending on the essential nature of the right and the need it serves our human nature. So of course the right to life is off the highest rank as it is the basis for the other human rights and granted directly by God. The human rights of the culture of death also have a system of ranking which is based on the political influence a "right" has gained for itself. So the "right to abortion" is growing in strength in some quarters. Whereas it is not acknowledged in Ireland, it is in the USA, In fact in the USA there are those who are now pushing out the scope of the right to abortion so that it means a right to a dead baby so if a baby survives abortion the right to life does to kick in but there is a right to finish off the job and ensure that the baby dies. The expansion of the right to abortion to include infanticide is also a detectable not to mention a detestable movement.

To come to hope. In the hierarchy, Hope, it is very similarly highly valued, even essential, in both cultures. Where hope differs is in the *object* of our hope and in that its meaning is completely different.

For us Hope is Jesus, it is expressed in his gospels where it is personified in His life and in the life of those who follow Him and it is embodied and received in the Eucharist. In our understanding and experience of hope God is always bringing forth good, always ready to forgive, to lift, to correct, to guide, to bestow grace. In doing so He is living in and with us and preparing to welcome us into life with him in the perfect and unending happiness of heaven. And for me that Hope is not diminished by the contrast with my utter weakness, selfishness, stupidity and constant mistakes because my future is, if I choose, in God's hands and He is always ready to love us into holiness and then in to heaven. And I can be hopeful because he does not require a heroic sacrifice at which I would surely fail but instead breaks my cooperation into the tiniest of tiny baby steps in which what is asked of me is to say yes, be willing and make the tiny effort that is required at that tiny moment. This I can try to do

This is spelled out in the gospel, but the full extent and beauty of the Hope that is ours as Christian is lost in translation. We are all familiar with the passage that "unless you are as little children you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven". This could sound like an admonition, but Scripture scholars tell us that the term used by Jesus is truly translated as "Unless you are as the newborn suckling". You doctors, midwives and parents should find this much more descriptive. As a mother who has breastfed 9 children I contemplate the utter helplessness of the new born, with his or her focused, unblinking gaze into the eyes of the mother, the complete identification and absorption of the newborn and the mother who in her turn is supplying all the warmth, nourishment, and security that the baby needs.

If a newborn can do this or rather be this then it is not too much to ask of any of us to be this and thus allow God, who in supplying everything that we need, gives us and brings about in us all the good things that in his wisdom he wills. This is our Hope.

So what is hope in a culture that does not have this Hope. Of course the hope must then centre on the good things that can be acquired and enjoyed in this life. Education, wealth, health and art organised around concepts like equality, freedom and charity. But these tend also to be the good things of God. The difference is found in a attitude of achievement and attachment to earthly things rather than gratitude and detachment.

However the real difference in the Hope offered by the culture of Life and the culture of death is that our hope leads us to become more and more like that newborn suckling, trusting, able to understand the providence that cares for us and loves us in every situation. We then are able to be completely aware and involved in the world around us and yet unshaken in that trust and love of what happens. Not so in the culture of death. Hope becomes dependent on events, persons and things. Advertisements tell us where to find hope. The beautiful laughing couple on the sunshine holiday brochure sells the hope of companionship, love, even sex in exchange for the price of a package holiday to the Canaries. Our hope is in climbing the corporate ladder or at least it was before the credit crunch,

Hope in the culture of life is apart from any material gain more often than not in spite of material gain or loss. But in the culture of death hope becomes dependent on acquisition and achievement and therefore becomes something that can be manipulated for profit and for power.

I do not remember a time when there has not been a current threat as part of the ambience in which we live. The Cold War, Polio epidemic, Global Cooling, Recession and Mass Strikes, and Millennium Meltdown, to name a few. Some of these threats were all too real and some were suspiciously Hegelian. Decide what you want to achieve and then create a threat or utilise an existing one to require the solution which will lead to your goal.

Today there is both a quantitative and qualitative difference in what are now considered the main threats. We no longer face a single threat at a time but a menu of threats all competing for our attention and dedication. Quantitatively they are different in the extreme devastation we are assured they could bring. Financial crash, terrorism, Climate Change, energy Crisis, Avian Flu. In the most fear-provoking language we are told that it could be the end of prosperity, the end of fossil fuels, the end of security and the end of the world. This tsunami of threats is meant to call us to action, but for many they do not motivate but immobilise. Can there be any other reaction?

This was the reaction that Victor Frank saw in the concentration camps, when people's individuality had been taken from them and their dignity as people denied. The consequence was desperation and hopelessness and a willingness to follow anyone who promised to save.

So what Hope is offered by those who speak a different language in the face of the threats? For them the Hope is in getting agreements at higher and higher levels and forcing compliance through incentives, taxes levies, fees and penalties. In exchange for keeping the world's temperature steady or keeping aeroplanes terrorist free, or maintaining the financial order, they ask us to give up more and more freedom in favour of their control. They also demand that we give them more and more of our money and resources - in a sense they demand our trust in almost a God-like way to allow them to do God-like functions. In exchange they offer Hope, their brand of hope.

My hope is in the good Lord who has given us freedom. The more we love and obey God the greater that freedom grows, The more we put God first the greater we are showered with his blessings, material sometimes, spiritual always. This is real hope here on earth and of course forever after.

It was interesting that in the Climate Change committee of which I am a member, one of the amendments in a current report is an amendment to delete the word creation. Those that want it deleted are adamant that it is dangerous to use a word that has any hint of religious connotations. Why? Because the word creation and the God that lies behind it has the potential to unravel their whole house of cards

For pro-life law makers now the stakes have just gotten higher, because it is no longer an anti life ideology against a life promoting relationship that is the relationship between God and man. It is an anti-life relationship. With a person who is deeply, committed anti life, pitted against our relationship with Jesus, who is Life.

Of course there is no comparison between Christ and a mere human being, but if our relationship with Christ is weak it will not hold up against the ardour stirred up currently. So for our part our hope is in deepening the life giving relationship, in pray in sacrifice our work is cut out for us.