

# **All life is sacred: We are family**

When I travelled to Ghana, I befriended a woman named Adama who worked for Catholic Relief Services. As we travelled from one destination to another, we entered into a wonderful conversation about family members and family-hood. My heart was lifted when Adama answered the question of who her family was by talking first about the ancestors and their gifts to the family once on earth and especially now as they reside close to the throne of God. She further explored the hope of those who she awaits to arrive in the future, now missing, yet on their way to the human family on earth. Adama said, "These are the ones who will contribute a God-given gift to the entire family in the circle of spirituality and faithfulness, strengthening family bonds as well as gainful human qualities of support." I have often thought of Adama's reply regarding family while holding onto my own family, those related to me by blood, by ethnicity and by faith.

The above story of family-hood holds some of the reasons why the painful accounts that someone who was once among us has fallen due to violence draws such hurt. The reality that this tragedy is being repeated in our community has become a deep wound. It hurts so bad. Oftentimes, we go to bed haunted by the cries of mothers and fathers, sons and daughters of those brutally taken from us, and now we hold their voices within our souls. Someone is missing among us who makes the family more complete. That act of violence or abortion robs us of God's giftedness among us. Abortion and this culture of death warrants our attention. Escalating acts resulting from this "culture of death" perpetuating within our society is why the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life (NBCAL) stays vigilant in its mission to pray, proclaim and stand boldly for an end to abortion, all acts of violence, evil and injustice that destroys the sacredness of life.

All life is sacred. Thus the NBCAL has called for the establishment of June as "Abortion and Acts of Violence Awareness Month," an opportunity to raise the message of the sanctity of life through prayer and action. According to Dr. Beverly A. Carroll (of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church, Assistant Director of African American Affairs): "June is a good time to raise up the importance of life and denounce violence. As

Pope Benedict XVI said, violence and cynicism so often seems to choke the fragile growth of grace in people's hearts." Franciscan Father James Goode serves as the president of NBCAL and calls this effort "a prayerful, conscious awareness, sustained effort of converting hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life - one life at a time." Father Goode also quoted Pope Benedict XVI from his historic visit last year to the United States: "The church is called to proclaim the gift of life, to serve life and to promote a culture of life."

The National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life encourages the following to stop violence and end abortion:

- Encourage prayers for peace and an end to abortion during intercessory prayer at Mass;
- Offer forums for youth to discuss violence and gang activity, such as Bishop Denis J. Madden's forum on May 27;
- Offer initiatives with and among youth that foster self-esteem and family-hood;
- Support Neighborhood Watch Groups that encourage peaceful resolutions to community issues;
- Contact and become acquainted with efforts sponsored by our local Respect Life Office;
- Contact the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life, [www.blackcatholicsforlife.org](http://www.blackcatholicsforlife.org), for more information.

Bishop J. Terry Steib, S.V.D., says, "When we promote the beauty and sanctity of human life, it is necessary to promote life in all of its facets." "Choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

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