

On Matt Birk, blockbusters and AC

By Christopher Gunty

As the summer heats up, here are some snippets and short thoughts:

- **Retired Ravens' center Matt Birk** took some heat for not attending the White House celebration of the Super Bowl championship. Birk easily could have sent a message that he was otherwise occupied, but that would not have been true. The stalwart pro-life advocate caught some heat for not putting aside his feelings about life issues and for making the June 5 event "political."

Let's be frank: the visit of a professional championship team to the White House **is** a political event. It allows the president, whoever it is at the time, to connect with the players and fans of the champions. That boosts the public profile of the office-holder.

Birk was upset about President Obama's comments at an April 2013 event for Planned Parenthood, where he ended his speech by saying, "God bless Planned Parenthood." Birk - and many others - just couldn't stomach that. In a June 6 radio interview, Birk said he had "great respect for the office of the presidency," but could not endorse Obama's statement "in any way."

That's a solid stand to take, and Matt Birk ought to be commended for it, rather than derided. Birk was echoing the thoughts of many, and he used the occasion to highlight the president's duplicity. Obama says he wants to help children and families, but asks for God's blessings on an organization that kills more children than any other in the land. Our helmet's off to you, Matt.

- **Summer blockbuster movies** are a recent American tradition. If you've seen any movies lately, including kids' and family movies, you'll get 15 to 20 minutes of previews with your popcorn and the main feature.

Other than the violence and mayhem in the previews and the movies, one recent trailer stood out by being a little disturbing. "Delivery Man," due out this Thanksgiving, is about David (played by Vince Vaughn) who donated anonymously to

a sperm bank, and it's eventually revealed that the sperm bank went a little overboard: David is the biological father of 533 children.

Just from the trailers, you get the impression that David hasn't amounted to much of anything, but he decides to set out to become a guardian angel for his spawn, one at a time.

It's difficult to judge a whole movie on a two-minute preview, but one cannot expect stunning social commentary from Vince Vaughn. The intention of donating sperm is to separate biological parenting from actual parenting. There's an old adage that any man can be a father, but it takes a special one to be a dad. The first part of staff writer Maria Wiering's series on "Playing God" addressed some of these issues about assisted reproduction technologies (visit tinyurl.com/cr-playinggod2 for the story). Suffice it to say, problems such as those we can expect to see in "Delivery Man" are just some of the concerns that church teaching has with conception that is manufactured without regard for the consequences.

- **Summer heat can weigh heavily** on some of our most vulnerable populations. The poor and the elderly can suffer for a variety of reasons. They may not be able to afford the high electric bill that comes with summer cooling. Some, especially certain older folks, may still be thinking of the days when no one had AC, and a few box fans were enough to cool the home.

We've already had several 90-degree-plus days, and with the bulk of July and August to come, we can expect more.

So, be a good neighbor: check on your neighbors daily when it gets hot. Offer a place to cool off or a trip to a mall for some air-conditioned comfort. We **are** our brothers' and sisters' keeper.

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