

Defending the Truth: A Lesson in Respect Life Apologetics

OPENING PRAYER

5 minutes

O Mary,
bright dawn of the new world,
Mother of the living,
to you do we entrust the cause of life.
Look down, O Mother,
upon the vast numbers
of babies not allowed to be born,
of the poor whose lives are made difficult,
of men and women
who are victims of brutal violence,
of the elderly and the sick killed
by indifference or out of misguided mercy.
Grant that all who believe in Your Son
may proclaim the Gospel of life
with honesty and love
to the people of our time.
Obtain for them the grace
to accept that Gospel
as a gift ever new,
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude
throughout their lives
and the courage to bear witness to it
resolutely, in order to build,
together with all people of good will,
the civilization of truth and love,
to the praise and glory of God,
the Creator and lover of life.
Evangelium Vitae n. 105

A Reading from Letter to the Ephesians 6:10-20.

Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power. Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all (the) flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the

helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. To that end, be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones and also for me, that speech may be given me to open my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that I may have the courage to speak as I must.

OBJECTIVE

There is objective truth; and it is our responsibility to speak it, and to speak it with compassion.

Learning Objectives / Essential Lessons

During this presentation it is essential to communicate the following points:

- There is objective truth. This truth includes that abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide are grave evils.
- The source of this truth and our strength to speak it is Jesus Christ.
- Speak the truth with compassion.
- You are responsible for building the culture of life.

LECTURE

15 minutes

- Pray First
 - Invite the Holy Spirit to speak through you.
 - Pray for the wisdom to most effectively build the culture of life and love your neighbor.
 - We are most effective when we speak with the love of Christ.
 - Pray before, during, and after.
 - If you stumble on words, remember that you are speaking the truth, you are speaking with the help of the Holy Spirit, and Christ will work through you.
- Know your audience/your neighbor
 - Keep it compassionate.
 - Your peers and your community may also suffer post-abortion grief, struggle with end-of-life issues regarding a relative or friend, or be in a crisis pregnancy.
 - Argumentation and condemnation bring arguments and instill distrust. The respect life message is one of hope and of love. Speak the truth with compassion.
- Know your facts
 - Keep it simple.
 - Your peers and your community suffer from misinformation about these evils.
 - The truth about abortion is not relative. Either the unborn are distinct human beings and killing them is evil or they are not human and there should be no restrictions on what a woman does to her body alone.
 - Moral neutrality is not possible.
 - Over 1 million abortions are performed each year in the United States.
 - Statement: “I have no position on abortion. It’s complicated.”

- Are infants or 4 year olds less valuable than adults?
- Environment
 - Does changing location make someone valuable?
- Degree of dependency
 - Are those who depend on insulin or feeding tubes less valuable than others? Since infants cannot survive without relying on others for food, are they less valuable than children?
- Review these simple questions and answers. They should be memorized.
- This is up to you
 - If not you, who? If not now, when?
 - “The revelation of the *Gospel of life* is given to us as a good to be shared with all people. . . . Our own joy would not be complete if we failed to share this Gospel with others but kept it only for ourselves.” *Evangelium Vitae* n. 101.

ACTIVITY

15 minutes

Compassionate Truth

Invite students to brainstorm statements or questions they have heard and have had trouble responding to. Suggest a few below as examples. Ask them to write their ideas down and hand them in.

Invite groups of 3-4 students to brainstorm compassionate, but honest responses to some or all of the following statements (read or post only the statements, not the suggested answers). Also include some of the student suggestions from the previous activity. Ask students to imagine a friend or classmate brings up each topic and to decide how best to respond. After each group has had a chance to choose the best response (or 2) to each statement, invite a spokesperson for each group to present to the whole group their answer. Take each statement in turn. After each group has presented on a statement, suggest the responses below. Advise students how not to answer as well.

- “It’s just a blob of tissue”
 - You could be speaking to a woman discerning abortion or to a woman who may one day consider abortion. ALWAYS refer to the help available.
 - Cite fetal development facts
 - At the moment of conception, there is a distinct, living, and whole human being.
 - The only difference between that zygote or embryo and you is: size, level of development, environment, degree of dependency. Do any of these invalidate the right to life?
- “I had an abortion. It was my choice and it was the right thing for me.”
 - First – 43% of women (and presumably 43% of men) have experienced abortion personally before the age of 45. Remember when you talk about abortion that every person you talk to could be post abortive. Speak the truth, but speak it with compassion.
 - I am so sorry. I know that must have been a very difficult decision.
 - Refer them to Rachel’s Vineyard for help.
- “What about rape and incest?”
 - Because the unborn are human beings, the more important question is this: how do we treat other humans that remind us of a painful event?

- It is estimated that these constitute less than 1 % of all abortions.
- “What if the mother’s life is at stake?”
 - Clarify Church teaching on this issue.

While students brainstorm in small groups, select a few of the student responses that were submitted before the activity. After each statement above and responses have been discussed, read aloud the student submissions you have selected and ask the group to brainstorm aloud with responses.

LECTURE

5 minutes

Reiterate essential lessons

- There is objective truth.
- This truth includes that abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide are grave evils.
- Your peers and your community suffer from misinformation about these evils. They may also suffer post-abortion grief, struggle with end-of-life issues regarding a relative or friend, or be in a crisis pregnancy.
- Speak the truth with heartfelt compassion. Compassion (com-passio) means to “suffer with” the other.
- You are responsible for building the culture of life. If not you, who? If not now, when?

Quote

“First they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me.” - Rev. Martin Niemöller

QUESTIONS

5 minutes

CLOSING PRAYER

God has no body on earth but your body.... no hands but yours.... no feet but yours.

Your eyes are the eyes that must see the beautiful baby hidden in the womb.

Your eyes are the eyes that must see the precious child even at the moment of fertilization.

Your ears are the ears that must hear the silent cry for help of the unborn baby.

Your ears are the ears to hear the insults you will bear for standing for life.

Your mouth is the mouth that must plead for the life of the defenseless unborn child.

Your mouth is the mouth that must speak the truth about the sacredness of all life.

Your heart is the heart that must burn with the love of Christ for all life.

Your heart is the heart that must burn with the love of Christ for all who support the culture of death.

Your feet are the feet with which to carry Christ to frightened women facing unplanned pregnancies.

Your feet are the feet to stand in prayer on the sidewalk or counsel those entering the abortion clinic and to stand in public witness to the value of the babies being aborted.

Your hands are the hands with which to cast your ballots for pro-life politicians and judges.

Your hands are the hands that Christ has chosen to help build a culture of life.

Adapted from a Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila by the Archdiocese of Kansas City