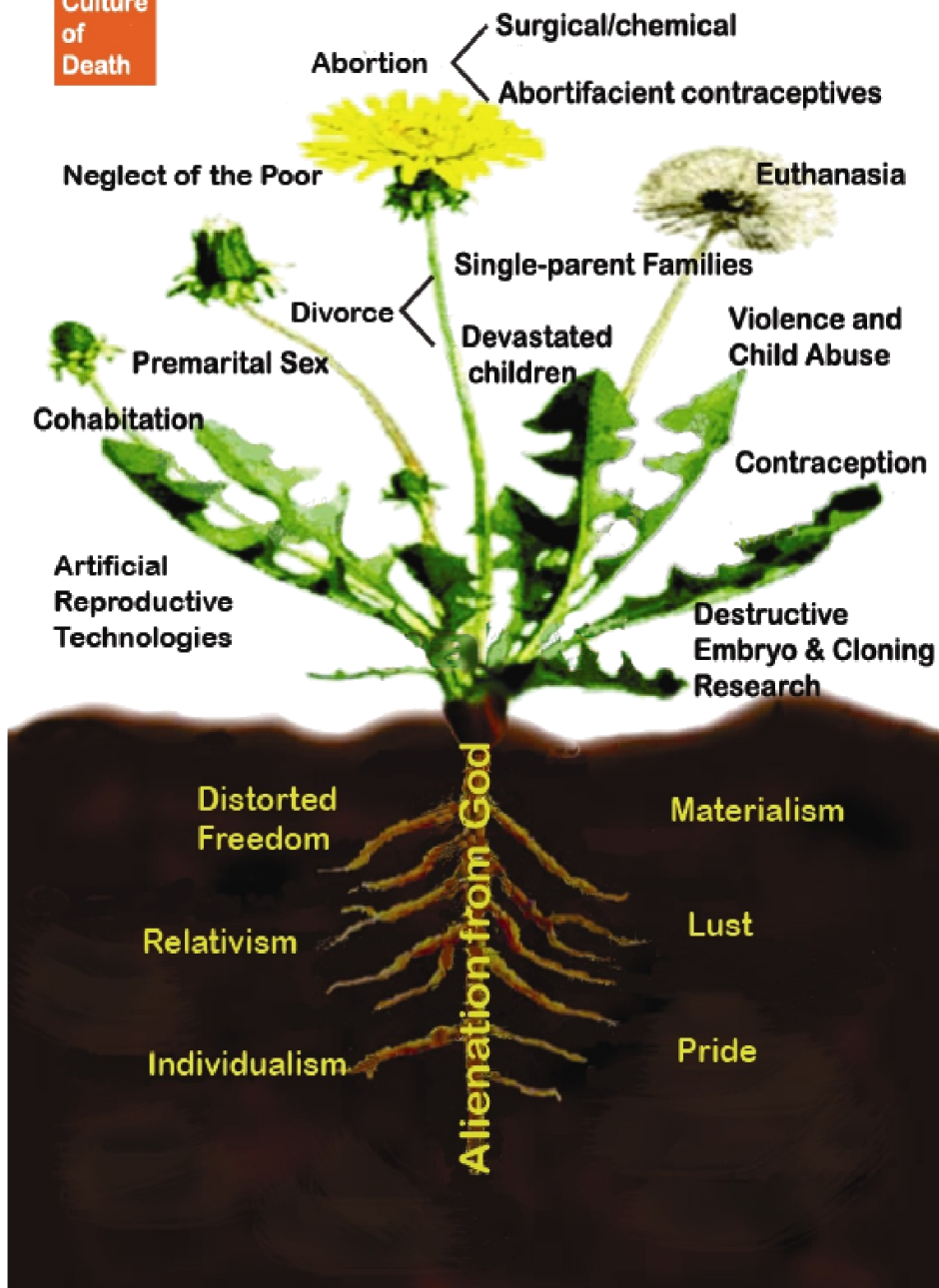


The Roots of the Problem

Culture of Death



The Cure

Culture of Life



The Roots of the Problem (Culture of Death)

More than thirty years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court (in *Roe v. Wade*) legalized abortion on demand throughout nine months of pregnancy. As a result, over 45 million babies have been killed and millions of mothers have been wounded physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As Blessed Mother Theresa said, abortion has “deformed a great nation”. But abortion, like every attack against human life, is a symptom of deeper problems. In 1995, Pope John Paul II explored these problems in his encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (“The Gospel of Life”).

The accompanying picture is a visual representation of those problems (roots) and their manifestations (weeds) in society. One feeder root is the **distorted notion of freedom** characterized by radical **individualism** (self-centeredness, viewing others as obstacles/burdens *not* opportunities to give/receive love); **relativism** (no recognition of moral absolutes or objective truth) and **materialism** (valuing possessions above people). The taproot (main problem source) is **alienation from God**. If our relationship with our Creator is weak, then our understanding of the value and meaning of human life created in His image is also weak. Think about it. If you have no clue who Michelangelo was and someone gives you one of his paintings, you’d have no idea of its value. If you didn’t like it, you might sell it at a garage sale or just throw it in the garbage. Likewise, if we don’t appreciate the value and meaning of human life, we are more likely to violate its dignity. Violating the dignity of human life, like all sin, alienates us further from God and compounds the problem.

The Cure (Culture of Life and Love)

The main root for rebuilding a culture of life and love is the **opposite** of alienation from God: **spiritual renewal**. The healthier our relationship with God, the more profound our respect for human life. Therefore, the most basic, profound, pro-life activity we can pursue is to strengthen our relationship with God, and therefore foster greater holiness in ourselves and radiate it to those around us. The beauty and allure of living a holy life opens more doors and hearts to God’s truth and love than the most compelling and eloquent words. (See Tools, #1 below.)

Clearly human life is cheapened in many ways. As Christians, it is our duty to oppose anything that undermines the sacredness of the human person. In particular, though, legal abortion, contraception, assisted suicide, in vitro fertilization, embryonic stem cell and cloning research, have fostered a view of human life as an inconvenience, a burden, or a product to be manipulated, used and/or destroyed for the benefit of others.

In “The Gospel of Life”, the Holy Father says one way to counter this is to reflect on and celebrate human life as a miraculous and sacred gift:

“Indeed, ‘despite its hardships, its hidden mysteries, its suffering and its inevitable frailty, this mortal life is a most beautiful thing, a marvel ever new and moving, an event worthy of being exalted in joy and glory’...Moreover, man and his life appear to us not only as one of the greatest marvels of creation: For God has granted to man a dignity which is near to divine (Ps. 8:5-6). In every child which is born and in every person who lives or dies we see the image of God’s glory...a sign of the living God, an icon of Jesus Christ.” (EV #84)

Rebuilding a culture of life and love also requires us to serve the Gospel of Life. (Tools, #2-3)

“We are called to become neighbors to everyone and to show special favor to those who are poorest, most alone and most in need. In helping the hungry, the thirsty, the foreigner, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned—as well as the child in the womb and the old person who is suffering or near death—we have the opportunity to serve Jesus...’As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (EV #87).

Ultimately, the Holy Father tells us that in building a culture of life, the family has a decisive and irreplaceable role. “It is truly ‘the sanctuary of life: the place in which...the gift of life can be properly welcomed and protected’...It is above all in raising children that the family fulfills its mission to proclaim the Gospel of Life. (Tools, #1-3)

TOOLS

1. Weekly holy hour and fasting, daily Rosary and/or Mass, annual retreat, pray together as a family.
2. Work for a holy and healthy marriage and to raise faith-filled and virtuous children, serve on your parish’s pro-life committee or volunteer with a pregnancy-help center, St. Vincent de Paul Society or a hospice program, volunteer to teach natural family planning, participate in the social and political life of society.
3. Always be open to God’s will in having children, learn and live the Church’s teaching on the sacred gift of sexuality, foster individual and family prayer, protect family time from too many activities.

Bishops’ Pastoral Plan for Pro Life Activities

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