



*This is the tenth in a series of articles by the CCK Hispanic Committee on the **Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform** which aims to reach beyond the networks of the participating national agencies, and to enlist the support of Catholic individuals and institutions in dioceses throughout the country.*

Visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org for more information. Le invitamos a visitar nuestra página con regularidad, debido a que se estará actualizando constantemente con materiales, noticias relevantes y otra información que esperamos sea de su utilidad.

“Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock”

By Rev. Ken Mikulcik



Rev. Ken Mikulcik

As the decades have gone by without protection given to human life before birth, we have probably all reflected upon the meaning of being both anti-abortion and being pro-life. Being anti-abortion certainly implies a political and legal goal of providing protection for the unborn. But we have all recognized that being pro-life is a richer concept than simply being anti-abortion. We have realized that being pro-life means embracing the difficulties of life, making sacrifices, and recognizing the dignity of each person in whatever stage of life he or she is in. One of my favorite ways of framing the pro-life perspective is in terms of hospitality, which is a virtue. Hospitality is the habit of being a welcoming person, looking out for the other, and making room for that one. Is that not what so many pregnancy care centers aim to accomplish? How often have we desired that all human life not only be recognized as having a right to live, but even more to be welcomed! We have recognized that hearts need to change, and that a change in law, although necessary, is not enough. We desire that hearts and homes be open to welcoming these little ones.

But as it stands, we know that we have much work to do in that area, evangelizing our culture so that mothers and fathers will not only welcome the new life in the womb as a gift but also offer the “hospitality” that is responsible and generous parenthood. Many values that we see around us do not correspond with this. We are not accustomed to welcoming, but on the contrary, to protecting and defending what is ours, and eliminating the risk of the disturbance that an outsider might cause. People who are not familiar to us or similar to us in speech or custom we keep at arms length. There would be exceptions, but can you remember the last time a stranger was brought into your home to share a meal?



There is such a story in the book of Genesis. By the birth of Mamre, in the heat of the day, Abraham saw three men who were apparently not from the local area. “When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: ‘Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let

some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.’” “‘Very well,’ they replied, ‘do as you have said’” [Gen 18:2-5]. Abraham offers exceptional hospitality to these three strangers who are in some way a manifestation of the LORD. Receiving his hospitality, they ask about Sarah, Abraham’s wife, and then one of them promises that he will return in a year and she will have a son. So Abraham’s hospitality or reception of the lives of these three who have come from another place is echoed in the reception of life in the womb of Sarah who, with her husband, was advanced in age. The strangers’ life is welcomed and new life in the womb is welcomed.

So we find ourselves asking how life in the womb is not welcomed. We ask, too, how that human being in the womb has no legal status. We desire for it to be legally recognized, but because of our unjust laws, that life is in essence illegal. The border of the womb becomes a wall, a dividing line between recognized human dignity and no legal status. How is it that our cultural values can accept such double-mindedness? How can the side of a border that one falls upon determine one's dignity? Partial-birth abortion seems to be the ultimate example of the double-mindedness we exercise regarding the border of the womb, as the child on the fence is destroyed so close to acquiring the legal status of being fully birthed.

Returning to the story from Genesis we can take note that both the strangers and, Isaac, the one in the womb, are welcomed. Today our culture welcomes neither the stranger nor the one in the womb. Thus, we are more consistent than we realize.

Under our law the unborn have no legal status to claim a right to cross the border of the womb if the mother chooses (at the prompting of our culture and often directly from family) against this life. The dignity of the child is not a factor. So also with the immigrant strangers: their human dignity creates no legal claim to cross the border to support life. The way our society treats the border of the womb and the political borders separating nations diminishes our sense of the value of human life and dignity. We have no choice, as Catholics, but to stand up in its defense.

Should we be surprised that the stranger is not welcomed if our very own offspring (25%) are rejected? Should we be surprised that our own offspring are not welcomed when the stranger is rejected? Is not the present presumption that natural conception of new life be obstructed through contraception of some sort as the



“responsible” action? So also is not the present presumption that the immigrant has no claim whatsoever to live in our midst unless our civil law grants it? Our “choice” seems to trump their dignity. Our culture is quite consistent in making us the arbiters of life.

From the book of revelation we receive an invitation to take on the virtue of hospitality. The message to the angel of the church in Laodicea, a lukewarm place that considers itself rich and affluent, is first a chastisement but then also includes an invitation to open the heart: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me. I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne” [Rev 3:20-21].

July 2006

Rev. Ken Milkulcik is a priest working in the Owensboro Diocese as Pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Mayfield, KY

Action: Join Catholic Conference of KY's legislative advocacy network to influence immigration public policy, www.ccky.org.

Bishops call on the local church to help newcomers integrate in ways that are respectful, that celebrate their cultures, and that are responsive to their social needs, leading to a mutual enrichment of the local church.



1042 Burlington Lane
Frankfort Kentucky 40601
502.875-4345
cckstaff@ccky.org

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.