



ONE HEART

EUTHANASIA, THE DEATH PENALTY, AND ABORTION

GOAL

The goal of *One Heart* is to help teens understand the dangers and dehumanizing qualities of euthanasia, the death penalty, and abortion, actions that stop the human heart.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Euthanasia is anti-life because it is demeaning to the human person and denies someone’s opportunity for redemptive suffering.
- The death penalty is anti-life because it denies the inherent dignity of all people, even those who have committed great wrongs, and treats grave sinners as irredeemable.
- Abortion is anti-life because it destroys a human life in the womb.

KEY TERMS:

Euthanasia
Death Penalty
Abortion

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 4:10-15
Isaiah 50:6-7
Luke 9:23

CATECHISM:

CCC 2266-2279

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

The Life Night begins with a game in the style of *The Price is Right* that introduces teens to the idea that different things have different values, but all humans share the same inherent and high value. The Proclaim centers around the topics of euthanasia, the death penalty, and abortion, and explains that all people have the same value, whether they are ill, have committed crimes, or are still in the womb. The Break is a small group discussion about a Nazi named Rudolph Höss that challenges the teen’s understanding of justice and mercy. During the Send, teens pray for those who are affected by euthanasia, the death penalty, and abortion, and are challenged to continue to pray for them throughout the week as a spiritual work of mercy.

ENVIRONMENT

Add to the environment used in *One Choice* with pictures and stories of people in the style of *Humans of New York*. Print off pictures and stories of people whose lives have given testimony to the power of redemptive suffering, were wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death only to be exonerated later, or who have had conversions on death row. Also include pictures and stories of people who were nearly aborted. Encourage teens to take a look at these as they come in.

For stories of redemptive suffering, check out:

- <http://reallifecatholic.com/blessed-chiara-luca-badano-pray-for-us/>
- <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/a-saint-for-our-times-the-inspiring-story-of-chiara-corbella-petrillo-27329/>

For stories on people who have been exonerated from death row, check out:

- <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/innocence-list-those-freed-death-row>

For stories on people who have had conversion on death row, check out:

- <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/astagnaro/the-amazing-conversion-of-death-row-inmate-claude-newman>
- <http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/03/21/larry.king.tucker/>

For stories on celebrities who were nearly aborted, check out:

- <http://www.rebelcircus.com/blog/12-famous-people-almost-aborted/>
- <http://www.today.com/news/justin-biebers-mom-tells-why-she-chose-not-abort-17-999256>

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

80sand70sMemories: “The Price is Right theme song” (youtube.com)

Knights of Columbus Supreme Council: “Witness of Mercy: The Story of Jennifer Trapuzzano” (youtube.com)

“Stephen’s Story,” Life Teen (Edge Video Support: November 2015)

SOCIAL MEDIA HASHTAGS:

#LT_OneHeart

AS YOU GET STARTED...

If you are implementing this Life Night in a country other than the United States, become familiar with your communities laws regarding euthanasia, the death penalty, and abortion.

For a large budget Gather, consider purchasing items for students to guess the price of and actually giving it to them if they win. To make sure that all teens have a chance to win, split them up into teams and make sure that each team sends up a new teen every round.

For a Break with a more mature youth group already familiar with the pro-life message, consider giving them common arguments in favor of abortion, the death penalty, and euthanasia and have them come up with a pro-life answer to those arguments.

For a Send that continues throughout the week, hang three poster-sized sheets of paper and label them “Euthanasia,” “Death Penalty,” and “Abortion.” Have markers available nearby for teens to use. Instruct teens to sign their name and prayer commitment to pray throughout the week as they leave. For example, a daily decade of the rosary, a daily Divine Mercy chaplet, or the 9 Days for Life Novena.

HISPANIC INCULTURATION

By Chris Martinez

The Hispanic culture is pro-life, especially when it comes abortion. They welcome all children, whether planned or unplanned. They are committed to making it work. However, they will most likely know less about the intricate details of euthanasia and legitimate defense. Take time fleshing out the nuances of these teachings so they understand the message is consistent. The Church is opposed to direct and intentional killing, but accepts death as a part of being human. This means we can take our loved ones off life support, we can defend ourselves against an attacker, we can be a soldier in a just war, but we can never sentence anyone to death. Read and discuss the following passages from the Catechism of the Catholic Church either in the Proclaim or Break.

EUTHANASIA

“Even if death is thought imminent, the ordinary care owed to a sick person cannot be legitimately interrupted. The use of painkillers to alleviate the sufferings of the dying, even at the risk of shortening their days, can be morally in conformity with human dignity if death is not willed as either an end or a means, but only foreseen and tolerated as inevitable Palliative care is a special form of disinterested charity. As such it should be encouraged.” (CCC 2279)

BREAK

Unending Mercy (25 min)

Break teens up into small groups and give them copies of *The Conversion of Rudolph Höss Handout* which can be found on the *September 2017 Life Teen USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Life Support: *September 2017*. Instruct them to take turns reading it aloud.

Note For Core: The story of Rudolph Höss may rub many teens the wrong way because it violates our understanding of justice. However, that is the point. God's justice and mercy are far above our own. It is easy for teens to consider being merciful for smaller offenses, lying, stealing, etc., but it can be much harder for them to consider being merciful for bigger offenses. And yet, they would want to receive mercy if they were to commit a big offense.

Also, the story of Rudolph Höss is not included to demonstrate the potential conversion that being sentenced to death may inspire, but to humanize death row inmates and point to the reality that repentance is possible even for the worst of sinners.

After reading the story aloud, have a conversation with teens about God's mercy, even for the most hardened of sinners. Use the following questions to facilitate a small group discussion:

- What are your thoughts on the story of Rudolph Höss?
- Do you think it was fair that Rudolph Höss was forgiven? Why or why not?
- Would you have been able to forgive Rudolph Höss if your family had been affected? Why or why not?
- Do you think forgiveness can be earned? Why or why not?
- What stood out to you from the talk? Why?
- Why do you think it is difficult to accept that these three groups of people share the same inherent dignity and value as all of us?

- What are some ways in which we can show compassion to those who face the difficult prospect of abortion, the death penalty, or euthanasia?

SEND

Pray for the Living and the Dead (10 min)

Instruct the teens to gather back together in the main meeting space and ask for nine volunteers to come to the front. Give each volunteer a slip of paper with a prayer intention, found on the *Prayer Intention Handout* on the *September 2017 Life Teen USB* and online at lifeteen.com under Life Support: *September 2017*. Transition into the Send using the following:

One of the spiritual works of mercy is to pray for the living and the dead. So, we are going to pray for all of those who have been affected by euthanasia, the death penalty, and abortion. I invite you to kneel.

Instruct the volunteers to slowly and prayerfully read their intentions. Begin in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Intentions:

- We pray for those who are feeling hopeless because of the suffering or sickness they are experiencing. We pray that we would have the courage to remind them of their purpose and value. We pray that no one would ever believe the lie that their life is not worth living. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- We pray for the repose of the souls of those we have lost to euthanasia. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- We pray for all the victims of violence in the world. We pray that they would receive justice for the crimes committed against them, and they would find hope and healing in Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- We pray for those who have committed violent crimes and have hurt others. We pray that they would experience and respond to God’s call to repentance and conversion, and that they would know the infinite love of the God of mercy. We pray that they would turn from their sin and atone for what they have done. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- We pray for all of those who have been condemned to death. We pray that the use of the death penalty would come to an end and that we would find more humane ways to defend our societies and rehabilitate criminals. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- We pray for mothers and fathers who have lost children to abortion. We pray that the Holy Spirit would heal their hearts and inspire them to accept all children as gifts from God. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- We pray for those who are part of the abortion industry. We pray that they would experience a conversion of heart and would begin to defend life, rather than take it. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- We pray for the souls of all of the unborn, especially those lost to abortion. We pray that God, in His infinite love and mercy, would welcome those children into His everlasting Kingdom, and that they would one day be reunited with their families in love. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- We pray for ourselves, and our whole Church, that we would receive the eyes of Christ so that we could see, love, and value every person the way God does. We pray that the Holy Spirit would inspire fervor in our hearts to defend life always and everywhere, and that God would bless and multiply our efforts to create pro-life communities. We pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Close in a brief prayer and dismiss the teens.



ONE HEART

KEY TERMS

Euthanasia: The direct and intentional killing of someone who is sick or elderly.

Death Penalty: The direct and intentional killing, under penalty of law, given to those who have been found guilty of a capital crime.

Abortion: The direct and intentional killing of an unborn child.

TEACHING POINTS

THE PRICE IS RIGHT AND HIGH

- Unlike the game where different objects had different values, all humans have the same, high value.
- The pro-life position gets controversial when we talk about people who we might think have lost their value, like those who have committed grave crimes, or less value, like a child in the womb.
- Euthanasia, the death penalty, and abortion are anti-life because they involve the direct and intentional taking of life, the stopping of the human heart.

EUTHANASIA

- Euthanasia is the direct and intentional killing of someone who is ill or elderly, often with the intention of saving them from pain and suffering, or because their life is not seen as worth saving.
- Although some say that euthanasia allows a person to “die with dignity,” the opposite is true. Euthanasia strips the person of their dignity and power.



ONE HEART

TEACHING

THE PRICE IS RIGHT AND HIGH

Recap the game and then transition into the teaching.

Unlike the game, where different objects had different values, all humans have the same, high value. We introduced this idea last week -- that being pro-life is about making one consistent choice to recognize the inherent dignity of all people and treat all people with respect.

The pro-life position gets controversial when we talk about people who we might believe have lost their value, like those who have committed grave crimes or murderers. Or what about people who we might think have less value because they are a drain on our resources and aren't contributing to society, like an ill or elderly person? And what about people who we might think have less value because they are not yet born and their rights are infringing on another person's rights, their mothers, like a child in the womb?

This Life Night focuses on three major issues in our modern society that are disturbingly anti-life. Euthanasia, the death penalty, and abortion are anti-life because they involve the direct and intentional taking of life, the stopping of the human heart.

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia is the direct and intentional killing of someone who is ill or elderly, often with the intention of saving them from pain and suffering, or because their life is not seen as worth saving.

CCC 2277

Euthanasia can be an action or omission that has the intention of causing death, like omitting food and water to a person in a vegetative state with the intention of starving them or giving a lethal injection to someone who is terminally ill. Euthanasia is not the decision to forgo aggressive medical treatment or take someone off life support. These can be morally acceptable decisions that expresses acceptance of the human condition in the face of death.

CCC 2276-2279

Although some say that euthanasia allows a person to "die with dignity," the opposite is true. Euthanasia strips a person of their dignity and power. Yes, power. Those who are suffering have tremendous power because they have the unique invitation to unite their suffering with Jesus' suffering and redeem souls.

2 Corinthians 12:9

Jesus, in His Passion and Death, suffered greatly. He took the great evil that was done to Him and He turned it into the greatest good, the redemption of the world. That is why we refer to His sufferings as redemptive suffering. Those who are suffering greatly must hear that their life and suffering have purpose and power, and not be encouraged to consider ending their life.

Isaiah 53, John 19:1-30

THE DEATH PENALTY

There are many countries, the United States included, that continue to use the death penalty, the direct and intentional killing of those who have committed grave crimes, as a means of punishment. We should not allow crimes to go unpunished, but punishment should always respect the dignity of the human person and their right to life. No crime can cause us to lose our value.

Matthew 5:39, 44

Take Cain for example. God spared his life. He even protected Cain so that other people would not kill him.

Genesis 4:11-16

Consider showing the last meals of convicts on death row to demonstrate that those who have committed grave crimes are still people.

According to the Catholic Church, “punishment... as far as possible, must contribute to the correction of the guilty party.” But the death penalty does not do this. It does not serve to correct the beliefs or actions which were so damaging, not only to society and those harmed, but to the guilty party themselves.

CCC 2266

There have been many cases where we have put people to death only for them to be exonerated later.

Many people in prison and death row have had conversions. Even though God forgives us of our sin, criminals must still serve their sentence. Governments have the right to punish their citizens; God has the right to convert them. We have the responsibility to protect their right to life and opportunity to life in Christ.

ABORTION

The most talked about anti-life issue is abortion. Abortion is the direct and intentional killing of an unborn child in the womb.

The biggest difficulty when discussing abortion is that the core of the argument often gets lost in the emotions that come with the subject. At the very core of the abortion debate, there is one main question, when does a person become a person? If you are a person from the moment of your conception, then you should have a right to life, no matter where you are living, the womb included. But if you are not a person until later, then abortion is acceptable up until the time you become a person.

The Church teaches us, and is backed by biology, that personhood begins at conception. Biology defines personhood as individual, living, and human. From the very moment of conception, a child in the womb is all these things.

As soon as conception occurs, an individual and human cell, called a “zygote,” is formed. This zygote now has its own set of unique human DNA. Because this zygote has DNA different from anyone else, we know it is an individual, and because that DNA is human, we can say that this individual is human.

But is this individual and human zygote living? Biology defines living organisms as those which can grow, convert food into energy, and reproduce. A human zygote, from the very moment of conception, can reproduce its own cells by converting food to energy, and grow into a more mature being.

Therefore, as soon as a human zygote is conceived, a living, individual, human person has been created.

Keith L. Moore, The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology, 7th edition. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders, 2003. pp. 16, 2.

Since that is the case, that new human person should have the same rights as any other person. Just because they have not yet fully developed and are entirely dependent on their mother for life does not mean that they have any less dignity or worth.

Pastoral Note: There may be a teen(s) at this Life Night who has had an abortion, or encouraged others to do so. Let them know that the youth minister is available to speak with them without any judgements, is there to support them, and would love to talk with them about their experiences and help in any way.

EXCEPTIONS

There are situations that may look like exceptions to our pro-life teaching, but are not. The Catholic Church teaches that any direct and intentional killing is anti-life. The definition of

euthanasia is the direct and intentional killing of someone who is sick or elderly. The definition of the death penalty is the direct and intentional killing of someone who has committed grave crimes. The definition of abortion is the direct and intentional killing of a child in the womb.

Death is a fact of life. Sick and old people die. Babies die in the womb. These are not immoral acts but the reality of our human condition. If a pregnant woman is sick and in treating her sickness, the child dies, she did not have an abortion. She treated her illness and her child died. If a sick person is taken off life support and dies, that is not euthanasia, but accepting the consequences of disease and that one day, everyone dies.

What about a soldier at war who kills an enemy soldier? What about a man or woman who kills another in self-defense? The Church recognizes that there are times when taking a human life can be justified. Sometimes defending our right to life, or that of others, results in the death of an aggressor. But even in those situations, we have to recognize that death is a tragedy and should be mourned, not celebrated.

CCC 2263

EXERCISING COMPASSION

How do we work on transforming these issues in our society? How do we work to make our communities more pro-life? Certainly we should vote in a pro-life way, not just when it comes to euthanasia, the death penalty, and abortion, but in all issues.

However, voting isn't enough. We have to work on changing the minds and hearts of the individuals we encounter. To do that, we must educate ourselves. We have to know what the Church teaches and why, and we have to be able to explain it. Then we have to talk to others about it in a compassionate way.

Most importantly, we must continue on the journey of conforming our hearts to God's heart and enabling all our

actions and words to reflect the dignity of every human person at all times. We have to remember that these issues we have talked about at this Life Night involve real people with real problems, and when we speak the truth without loving them, we are not being pro-life.

We must also pray. Ultimately, it is God who changes hearts and minds, not us.

Notes: _____

