

It's about connecting dots

Do you remember — when you were a child — those sheets of paper with scattered dots that made no sense until you started connecting them? The more dots you connected the clearer the picture became.

Understanding and living out Catholic social teaching also involves connecting the dots. These dots are the many issues of injustice afflicting billions of our brothers and sisters. Intimately linked to these dots are the moral principles and teachings that modern popes and bishops have formulated to guide our response. Ignoring any of these issues leaves one with an incomplete picture of the church's social doctrine.

Catholic social teaching is all about connecting the dots! And while that's not easy, the Holy Spirit regularly presents opportunities for us to witness to the full truth.

Recently I connected two of those dots. The first dot involved participating in the Maryland phase of the "Face the Truth Tour." In several regions of the United States this tour helps raise awareness about America's silent holocaust: Abortion.

It is called "Face the Truth" because we hold large signs of aborted babies along heavily traveled streets, giving countless people the opportunity to see abortion for what it truly is: a horrible, bloody, \$500 million business!



Tony Magliano

Seeing actual photos of the smallest members of the human family brutally dismembered is indeed unpleasant. Some complain that these pictures are too disturbing to see. But if that is true, and it is, then shouldn't abortion itself be too disturbing to tolerate?

Father Frank Pavone, director of Priests for Life, writes: "People who see these images never feel the same about abortion again. These pictures save lives, convert minds and hearts, and break through the denial that allows abortion to continue in this country."

To download the 11-minute "Face the Truth Tour" or receive a free video and information on how you can start a tour in your area, log onto www.prolifeaction.org or call 773/777-2900.

The day after the "Face the Truth Tour," I made a connection to the second dot. Two hours before the execution of Steve Oken — by lethal injection — I stood outside the Maryland State Penitentiary fingering my rosary beads in silent prayer for the salvation of his soul.

My presence — together with a dozen people of various backgrounds — was also a protest against capital punishment.

Not far from us was a large group holding signs saying: "GIVE OKEN THE JUICE."

Rather than protect us, capital punishment hurts us. It causes bitterness, vengeance and violence to fester in our souls. It makes us less human, less mindful that we are all made in God's image and likeness.

Pope John Paul II, while celebrating Mass in St. Louis Jan. 27, 1999, said, "I renew the appeal I made most recently at Christmas for a consensus to end the death penalty, which is both cruel and unnecessary."

Among those agreeing with the pope is the group "Catholics Against Capital Punishment." Their Web site, www.cacp.org, is worth checking out.

Living the Catholic faith demands a consistent concern for all life. In his encyclical "The Gospel of Life," Pope John Paul II puts this challenge to us: "Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent. It cannot tolerate bias and discrimination, for human life is sacred and inviolable at every stage and in every situation."

It's all about connecting the dots!

Tony Magliano is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

LETTERS

You cannot be selective regarding life

To the editor:

One common argument in the political debate over abortion is, "abortion trumps all other pro-life issues." I have heard this statement many times on EWTN, in some Catholic periodicals and newspapers, and from some bishops.

Compare this to the other side's "All women have an unconditional right to an abortion." Both are promoted as high-minded universal principles, which brook no exceptions. However, they are both disingenuous, misleading, and false.

The "trump principle" is used against those who are anti-war or pro-poor and yet are also "pro-choice" or "pro-abortion."

The Just War Theory aside, I cannot see how anyone can so easily dismiss the inherent evil of war. It is arrogant to think it's OK to incinerate hundreds of thousands of people in bombing raids, destroy their houses and their crops, kill their babies and the babies' parents and families, or kill because you don't like the victims' religion (as in the Holocaust or ethnic cleansings in the Balkans or Sudan or Indonesia). The unjust killing in war is on the same moral plane as killing a fetus. It is warped thinking to say that

one "trumps" the other. One cannot evade moral responsibility by hiding behind this false principle. But that's what the trump principle permits one to do.

As Christians, we have a lot of mandates. We have to feed the hungry, love our neighbor, love our enemies, etc. These are not suggestions. Jesus never said that one trumps any other.

One cannot say, "Stop Abortions" and yet say, "Go to War." Nor can one say, "Stop the War" and yet say, "Abortion is your right." Hard sayings? We have to deal with both as we decide how to vote and when we approach the Lord's Table. When it comes to life, you can't be selective.

Donald L. Muench
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Stories on war missing

To the editor:

I appreciate your attempt in the September 04 edition to present a balanced and non-partisan overview of campaign issues. However, your choice to carry Nancy Frazier O'Brien's CNS article with the headline "Abortion issue in election forefront," (accompanied by a partisan, divisive, provocative photo) suggests the Catholic media's pro-Bush, Republican bias. You do no service to the electorate by continuing to reduce complex sanctity-of-life issues to the entrenched polarities of "pro-life" and "pro-choice."

As I read this edition, I didn't once come across the word "Iraq." Did I miss it? Did I miss your mention of the U.S.-backed wars in Afghanistan and Palestine? "Iraqi civilians" were referred to in Carol Crossed's piece, which was the only article in which I found any reference to our country at war. Meanwhile, the word "abortion" is printed at least sixteen times. According to your lead article, the "wide range of topics" on which our bishops offer guidance does not include war.

Those who support our current pro-war administra-

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