

Some see protecting life as 'abnormal'

Not long ago I gave a talk on why the death penalty in our country should be abolished. I pointed out that, as a pro-life Catholic affirming the stand of Pope John Paul II, I believed this even though I was the mother of a murdered son and daughter-in-law.

During the question-and-answer session one man got up and literally shouted at me that I was "abnormal." He went on about how a "normal" person whose children had been the victims of a murderer would want that person executed. A "normal" person would know that a killer doesn't deserve to live.

There was no point in trying to defend my position. Some people will always think I'm "abnormal" because I do not believe in killing a killer.

I remembered talking to a psychi-



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The Bottom Line

atrist about the question of what is normal when it comes to behavior or beliefs, and he had a specific answer. "Normal," he said, "is what most people are." And he explained, "It's statistical. If most people — numbers-wise — act a certain way, then that's the norm, or what's normal."

According to that psychiatrist's explanation, the man who took offense

at my position against the death penalty would be the "normal" one.

The most "abnormal" advice ever given to humankind was heard on the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said to turn the other cheek when someone offends you, to forgive and forget, to think of others first and to clean up what goes on in your head when you want to seek revenge.

Considering the state of the world, I would have to conclude that the majority of humans do not accept those teachings. And, according to the psychiatrist, "normal" is defined as what the majority do.

I think that to be called normal, a person should display a very positive attitude about the ingredients of each day — family, friends, job and the situations one meets. In all of one's relationships, there should be respect, recognition of the others'

rights and always an abhorrence of exploiting another.

I have met people who are kind, smiling, other-centered and more focused on the contributions they can make to others. I call them normal.

But more than anything else, I think a normal person is one who works for human betterment and believes that this is the bottom-line assignment we were given by our Creator who sent his Son to explain this to us and to show us "how to make the world right," as the English writer and convert G.K. Chesterton put it.

It is sad that, even to this day, if we follow Jesus and become peacemakers and guardians of life — even of the lives of killers — we will no doubt be called "abnormal."

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