

Last Friday, I surveyed San Francisco Chronicle, as I was having the breakfast. The top three articles with the large font on the front page said: "School for at-risk kids is a model for success." "Garrido, wife, plead guilty to kidnapping." "Lifers more likely to be paroled under Brown." I will skip over the lesser articles about White House's response to the protest video, and the new police chief in San Francisco.

Then page 2 reported on the royal wedding: "Carnival air as throngs camp out for royal wedding." Also on the beatification of Pope John Paul II: "Church's honor for native son thrills Poland."

Page 3 was a full page commercial. Page 4 reported on what was happening in three Arab countries. Libya: "Khadafy's forces shell rebel city, battle at border." Pakistan: "Taliban militants bomb bus full of Navy personnel." Morocco: "14 killed, 23 hurt in terror

bombing." Each article had a picture to show.

Then on page 5, on Afghanistan: "Prison warden, officials arrested in Taliban escape." The other article said, "Carter says North Korea wants summit with South."

Then my attention was directed to page 6: a large picture showed a flattened housing tract that the killer tornado left behind in Alabama: "Ruins combed for survivors; at least 297 die."

That was what was happening in one day in the life around the world, around the nation, and around the bay area, as the newspaper reported. The only good news I could say was about the at-risk kids doing well in a school, a school that gave hope and dream for the kids.

The other news about the kidnapers made me wonder what justice may be done on behalf of the woman who was kidnapped as a child and grew up as a prisoner, and bore two

children of the tormentor. It was life that was taken away from her and her family, and nothing can replace it, or compensate for the loss. A thousand deaths of the criminals would not placate the wounded hearts, nor restore all the loss of joy of raising a child and watching the child grow up into a mature human being.

This crime of kidnapping a child and keeping her as the sex slave, then producing two more children from this crime, and depriving her and her children of the loving family, the potential, the dream, hope, and the abundance of life, was the perfect antithesis to life, and it was worse than death itself. I saw the face of evil in that crime. I wish Jaycee Duggard and her children lasting happiness. May God bless them, as they rebuild their lives and catch up with all things that were deprived from them.

This loss of life, although not death, deprived the quality experience of life, and is even more destructive than death itself. Today, Americans hear a lot of

rhetoric about life. But do we understand what life is?

How about the pro-life movement? I can see that they want to advocate for the least of all human beings, the most helpless and voiceless: the unborn. So they want to prevent women from getting the abortion. What baffles me is their attitude about the same child once he or she is born.

Once an unwanted child is born to less-than-loving parents, the child's future is predictable. These children are exposed to the bad side of life more than others: neglected childhood, poverty, lack of health care, ineffective education, cycling through foster homes, drugs, sexual abuse, violence, crime, incarceration, even death.

Those who clamor for pro-life seem to lose the interest in the welfare of the children once they are born. They tend to vote against the preventive medicine for the children, because it raises tax. While they uphold the life

of the unborn, they call for death penalty for the criminals. They tend to support cutting the budget for school lunch, education, and libraries in the lean economic times.

I do not understand why they lose their passion in the life and welfare of the children, once they are born. They forced the mothers to give birth to these unwanted children, and once they are born to the less-than-ideal households, they say it is the single mothers' responsibility to raise them. In the mean time, they lobby to cut the welfare for these people. To them, life unborn is worth more than life born, apparently.

There is another aspect of life that these people advocate that I do not understand. It is about letting people die with dignity. They seem to confuse the prolongation of death with life. A Florida woman was brain-dead, medically speaking. The husband wanted to remove the life support, but the parents of the patient wanted to keep it on.

The husband wanted to move on with his life, but the parents wanted to hold on to their daughter.

But the politicians got a whiff of this, and they championed the cause of the sanctity of life, and even enacted a law that prevented the removal of life support. Eventually the woman finally expired, and the autopsy showed that the woman was brain-dead. There was absolutely no way she could have recovered and lived a normal life.

The real story behind the curtain, however, came out later: there was a monetary disagreement between the husband and the parents about splitting the large insurance payment. It was this disagreement, after all, that forced the woman's body on life support. The whole thing had nothing to do with the sanctity of life.

I would like to ask every one a question who bites the foam at the mouth, shouting for life: Do they want to be connected to the

hoses long after they have lost their consciousness, even if there were no possibility of revival. I want to ask them, if they would expect their family members to expend hundreds of thousands of dollars of their own money—the money that their surviving children could have used otherwise for the education and other pertinent things of life.

I would like to ask them: even though they hate raising the tax, whether they would like to continue to let the hospital and insurance companies to charge the government for the prohibitive medical costs that will eventually be borne by other tax payers and their children. I want to ask them, if they would find meaning in such an existence as a very expensive vegetable.

People find meaning in life, when they can love some one, and have a lasting, loving relationship. That is the most fundamental ingredient of the meaningful life, whether it is a marriage or a friendship. I know:

some people are convinced that money, fame, and power make one's life meaningful. I do not doubt that or discount that. I do recognize that people find meaning in the pursuit of money, fame, and power.

But there is always the repercussion from the pursuit of such things. These ramifications are costly, and there is always someone else who must pay for the individual's hunger for money, fame, and power. The price of pursuing these things usually is the destructive consequences in others' lives and the individual's life.

Those who have a loving family but no money still can be happy. But those who have money, fame, and power, but have no one to love, is almost always despised or hated by others, and cannot be happy. They understand that the ones who stick around with them are usually looking for the cut of their wealth. Everyone in the relationship understands that money defines their relationship. To whom is that life meaningful?

That leads me further to be baffled, when I think about the great homophobia that sweeps this nation. Apart from appealing to one's religion for the phobia, there is certain blindness in the arguments against homosexuality. The detractors say that it is the lifestyle they do not condone.

The fact of the matter is that the lifestyle of the heterosexual has proven to be rampantly immoral. If morality is what drives this homophobia, then we need to look at the heterosexual culture that tolerates the casual sex, multiple sexual partners, infidelity, irresponsible parenthood, and the marriages with great age gaps between spouses. These are the things that threaten the institution of marriage.

Both heterosexual and homosexual people tend to have multiple sexual partners, practice infidelity, and cohabit with the partner of large age gaps. At least the homosexual couples would not be irresponsible

parents, as some heterosexual couples are. These types of lifestyles are not commendable, whether it is done in the name of heterosexual marriage or homosexual marriage.

What really matters is the loving relationship bonded through the mutual and exclusive covenant that lasts with one partner. That is the lifestyle acceptable to God. All else is done by selfishness, either to exploit the other, or to fulfill one's materialistic greed, whether in heterosexual or homosexual relationship. To whom is that relationship meaningful?

The Gospel writer, John, expresses the reason why he wrote his volume in the verse 31: "But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." The purpose of John's writing his book is: to have life in Jesus' name. Jesus came to proclaim that God's purpose for the humanity is for us to have life.

God grants us life, and wants us to have it abundantly (Jn. 10:10). God proposes a way to reach this life, and John witnesses to us that that is done in the name of Jesus.

But Jesus is not the only voice in the world that says how that abundant life is to be achieved. Some says it is done by detonating the roadside bombs. Some say it is done by taking more and more money from others. Some say it is done by not allowing people die. Some say it is done by executing hated and unwanted people. Some say it is done by preventing abortion. Others say that it is done by convincing homosexuals to become heterosexuals, and illegalizing marriages between them. Will life become abundant, if the rest of the population follows in their names? What they call as life is not what Jesus calls it.

If Jesus wanted us to have life and have it abundantly, then we need to look at what really makes life abundant, and not just for

myself, but including everyone else, too. I cannot imagine that Jesus would intend only a few people to have life and have it abundantly, while the rest is consigned to eke out their living, or limited that abundance only to the power majority, while depriving the minority of that abundance.

One thing that is good about our God is that God calls *everyone* to have this life in Jesus' name. The resurrected Jesus invites today *everyone* to enjoy this life that is abundant. I wish that everyone accept this invitation, and live this life in Jesus' name.