

While I may not have the chance to follow current events as closely as some of you, especially with Lenten disciplines around social media, I did want to bring some awareness around the issue of IVF since it has made national news recently. The Trump administration has pledged support for In Vitro Fertilization, which stands directly opposed to God's will for procreation and seeing the child as a person to be received as a gift through the natural means made, not manufactured, with such collateral damage. I have personally seen the suffering of infertile couples struggling to conceive but there is a right and wrong way to go about it with God's grace and guidance. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has spoken very clearly and helpfully on this important issue:

"The IVF industry treats human beings like products and freezes or kills millions of children who are not selected for transfer to a womb or do not survive. Tuesday's executive order promoting IVF is thus fatally flawed and stands in regrettable contrast to the promising pro-life actions of the Administration last month.

Every human person is a precious gift with infinite dignity and worth, no matter how that person was conceived. People born as a result of IVF have no less dignity than anyone else. It is our moral responsibility to uphold the dignity of their brothers and sisters who are never given the chance to be born."

To learn more about in vitro fertilization, see: <https://www.usccb.org/prolife/reproductive-technology>. And for more on infertility, including ethical restorative reproductive medicine and research, please see: <https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/infertility>. I know infertility is a sensitive and painful reality for many, especially as couples now wait longer to start a family, but the Church and the Lord are here to help. God provides.

--- ***"This is My chosen Son; listen to Him."*** Lent is a time to fast, going without some creature comforts we may have overly relied on. It is a time to be more mindful of our charity towards the poor and those we live and work with, not delaying the good work we so often put off. But deep down, Lent also necessarily includes structured times of prayer, which is our lifeline to strengthen our relationship with the Lord.

The Father said of the Son, ***"listen to Him"***. How do we listen to Jesus? We all like to be listened to, especially after having been isolated for a while. I remember visiting a woman whose husband went off to the other room while I visited but came back after two hours and said to his wife "I've heard your voice the whole time" to which his wife responded, "what do you expect, I don't get out, I'm lonely." The Lord certainly wants us to talk to Him, Jesus even tells us to ask persistently, but we also need to try to listen to Him because our Heavenly Father already knows what we need.

So how do we listen? Do we take time to be quiet in the church, in our room, or prayerfully on a nature walk? Jesus waits in the Blessed Sacrament to comfort and encourage our hearts, especially when we feel lonely and like no one else will listen! Meditating on the Scriptures is one of the best ways to hear the Lord since it is His very Word. This is best done having already asked for what we think we need beforehand, so that we can see the Lord's personal response more clearly when we read the Scripture passage.

When we pray, we can say like St. Peter: ***"Master, it is good that we are here."***

God bless,

Fr. Mike