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On Sex And Death

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That gagging sound you may have heard recently was probably me, reading the latest assault on morality, common sense and language from the folks at BushSpeak. Last month, the Supreme Court upheld the ban on partial-birth abortions, a ruling which ruling our self-proclaimed "war president" cited as a victory for his administration's well-known commitment to the "sanctity of life."

Oh, please. This deep compassion for the sanctity of life does not seem to extend to the more than 3,300 American men and women already killed in Iraq for an indefensible global policy of lies and corruption, or the lives of another 170,000 or so troops still deployed there for increasingly spurious reasons. It does not extend to the untold hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives—men, women, children,

terrorists, civilians and innocent bystanders—killed in this woefully unaccomplished mission, or to the lives of thousands more in Afghanistan. Or for that matter, to the lives of innumerable victims of uncontrolled handguns and assault weapons here at home. Millions of lives in Iran are also starting to slip dangerously low on the scale of relative sanctity.

In reality, death is far more useful to this administration than life, especially war dead. With Memorial Day nearing, it's interesting to note the insidious way the war dead are always claimed by opposing factions to justify even more killing, so the dead won't have "died in vain." Stunning individual acts of courage and conscience occur every day in a war zone as soldiers die defending their units from attack. But it seems to me that everyone in a war dies in vain until the killing stops.

Here's the thing: either life is sacred or it isn't. Lest this sound too much like so-called "pro-life" rhetoric, let's define the terms even more scrupulously. It can't only be unborn life that's considered sacred, innocent until proven Muslim or Democrat (or pregnant). Nor does the responsibility of caring for life end as soon as it wriggles out of the birth canal. Life has to be adequately fed, and nurtured in a loving environment; its health has to be maintained; it has to be educated. Any blather St. George the Pious wants to spout about the sanctity of life has to be dismissed as so much meaningless cant from the head of an administration so lax about feeding, nurturing, and educating the lives of its youngest citizens, post-partum.

Nobody is really "pro-abortion," least of all women who have to make that devastating choice. But the

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opposite of abortion is not “life.” The opposite of abortion is education. There’s only one effective way to reduce the number of abortions performed, and it’s not by making access to safe operations illegal and forcing women and their sacred unborn back into the back alleys (or threatening every female alive with eternal damnation, in a froth of masturbatory self-righteousness).

The way to prevent abortions is by educating young women, especially tweens and teens, about their confusing, hormonal bodies, and the potential consequences of taking them out on a test-drive without fully understanding how the equipment works. You don’t turn kids loose behind the wheel of a car without a semester of Driver’s Ed. It’s mandatory in California schools because, hey, sooner or later, a teenager is going to get in a car. By what delusional excuse for rational thought can we deny teens of both genders the same basic education about their own bodies, whose siren song is even more urgent? Abstinence-only sex education is like sending them off on the freeway of life on a tricycle.

The point of Sex Ed, like Driver’s Ed, is to prevent death, either by an uncontrolled vehicle or an abortion that nobody wants. But education is not much prized by this administration. Education might lead to intelligent decision-making, a concept unclear to the Great Decider.

There are plenty of folks who are actively pro-war, however, especially in the Bush White House. (Although less vocal of late, with another election year looming and the “popularity” of the Iraq war, that ultimate reality TV show, plummeting in the ratings.) The pro-war faction is, of course, those who stand to profit off it: the oil companies cheerfully raping the land of its natural resources (while the BushSpeak machine cranks out even more insubstantial rhetoric about lessening our dependence on fossil fuels; tell that to Exxon, mister), the corporations awarded multi-billion-dollar contracts to rebuild the war zones we’ve obligingly blown to smithereens for them, and the military, with its multi-trillion-dollar budgets to develop “smart bombs,” rejoin the nuclear arms race, and otherwise annihilate lives less sanctified than our own.

The Bush organization has powerful cronies in all these categories; no abstinence policy was in effect when they all jumped into bed together. And their sanctimonious bleating about how we have to “support our troops” is exposed for the smug and empty sloganeering it is when you consider how little of those astronomical budgets are spent on equipment to protect actual troops on the front lines or medical facilities to care for wounded vets at home.

The way to support the troops is to bring them home. The way to uphold the sanctity of life is not to make abortion illegal, but to make it unnecessary.

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