



THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY

Connect with us!



www.mary.org



The Basilica of Saint Mary



@BasilicaMpls

Welcome

A few weeks ago I listened to a program on public radio which was part of Krista Tippett's "The Civil Conversation Project."

The program was moderated by Krista Tippett, and it featured David Gushee, a pro-life advocate, and Frances Kissling, who is pro-choice. They engaged in a dialogue about the issue of abortion. Two things struck me about their exchange: The first was that they were able

"...take back the discussion of this issue, and make that discussion once again reasonable, responsible, and respectful."

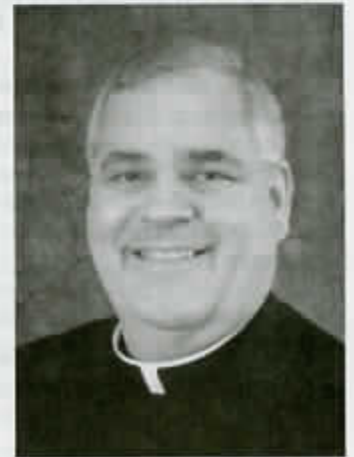
to engage in respectful conversation with each other. They didn't raise their voices, they didn't use inflammatory language, and they didn't talk over each other or try to put each other down. The second thing that struck me was that, when asked, they were able to acknowledge some value in the other's position and something in their own position about which they weren't entirely comfortable. Both of these things struck me as very important and perhaps offer us a way to talk about the issue of abortion.

As someone who is pro-life, I have become increasingly frustrated over the years with our collective inability as a society to talk about the critical issue of abortion in a civil and respectful manner. As a result, I believe we have become increasingly polarized on the issue of

abortion. Legalized as a private act, abortion continues to be a divisive and emotionally charged issue. The consequence of this has been that many good and balanced people have become unwilling to deal with or discuss this issue in any kind of public way. This leaves the public discussion of abortion to fringe people on both sides of the issue. Over the years, these people have become more and more vocal and appear to be speaking and acting for far more than the fringe element they represent.

Given the above, the challenge for those of us on both sides of the abortion issue is to take back the discussion of this issue, and make that discussion once again reasonable, responsible, and respectful. Now this does not mean that people should surrender their principles or their values. I certainly am not going to change my position. It does mean, though, that we need to invite each other to join in conversation about the issue of abortion. In this regard, I am convinced that for those of us who are pro-life, we are more apt to convince people than we are to coerce them.

As pro-life people, we have little chance of helping people understand our position on the issue of abortion if we are not able to enter into a civil and respectful conversation with them. I believe we best communicate our respect and reverence for life by modeling that respect and reverence in the way we treat others, especially those with



Fr. John M. Bauer

Pastor
The Basilica of Saint Mary

whom we disagree. We cannot ask or expect others to accept the values we proclaim if we don't give witness to them by what we say and do. This witness, it seems to me, begins with being respectful and civil in our conversations.

OUR VISION:

Seek the well-being of the city to which I have sent you. Pray for it to the Lord. For in seeking its well-being, you shall find your own.

— Jeremiah 29:7