

For the

LIFE of the WORLD

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For the **LIFE** of the **WORLD**

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Real and abundant life now and forever is God's free gift in Christ. Death is defeated. As Christians walk through a corrupt and dying world, they are called to embody real life, showing Christ to all who are dying. If Christian vision ever becomes blurred, faith in Christ again pierces the darkness with His light and life.

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By Dr. Jean S. Garton, a Co-founder and President Emeritus of Lutherans For Life, resides in Benton, Arkansas

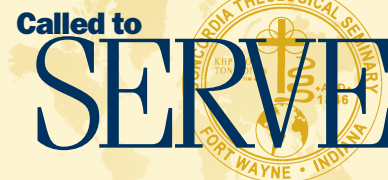
We are responsible not only for what we ourselves do but also for what we allow to be done. Abortion isn't about the right to choose or the right to privacy. Essentially, it is about the decline of human significance. That is why it is an issue for the church. This country desperately needs renewal and restoration, but this country is going nowhere unless the church goes there first.

10 Avoiding the Fence: Pro-life Education in Preparation for the Parish

By Mrs. Maggie Karner, Director of Life Ministries for the LCMS World Relief/Human Care, St. Louis, Missouri

This is where our Lutheran theology, with its proper distinction between Law and Gospel and its roots firmly planted at the foot of the cross, becomes so precious. This theology has so much to offer to people who are struggling with difficult life and death issues. It holds out the real hope of forgiveness and reconciliation, and our Catechism provides a wonderful window with which to examine these issues in the light of God's Word.

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Real & Abundant

“In the Beginning God Created...”

These five words begin the Sacred Scriptures. They are simple words in that they are readily understood, but they communicate a truth that is majestic and momentous. All time and space are defined by these words. All life begins here.

“In the beginning God ...” anchors the world in God’s life. God creates the heavens and the earth. The Spirit of God speaks and there is light. God separates the light from the darkness and names each.

As His creative work unfolds, it is clear that the heavens and the earth, the days and the seasons, are servants of life. God calls forth vegetation upon the land, living creatures in the seas, birds in the sky, and animals upon the earth. His divine blessing is joined to His holy will that these creatures be fruitful and multiply. All His work is made radiant by the refrain “... and God saw that it was good.” Life is a gift of God. It reflects the Creator’s goodness and His gracious character. The truth that God is prior to all created things has been confessed by the Church throughout the ages.

God’s Highest Creative Work: Human Life

The culmination and apex of God’s creative work is His fashioning man and woman in His own image and likeness. They are to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. They are to rule over all creatures and life on the earth. Their spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions reflect the goodness and character of the God who formed them. No aspect of their being is flawed or imperfect. The beauty and wonder of God’s creative work in man and woman stand as a witness to His glory and goodness.

Real and abundant life now and forever is God’s free gift in Christ. Death is defeated. As Christians walk through a corrupt and dying world, they are called to embody real life, showing Christ to all who are dying.

Genesis 2 describes more fully the remarkable and distinctive character of human life. God directly and personally forms man from the dust of the ground and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. Man is placed in a garden that God Himself has prepared and planted. God instructs man to work and care for this garden. Further, man alone is addressed

by God and warned, “... you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

God’s direct and personal formation of woman from the rib of the man underscores both the distinctiveness of each and the character of the man: “It is not good for the man to be alone.” Even as God is a trinity of persons within the unity of the Godhead, so the man who is in His image will have one who is like himself but also distinctively other.

Adam’s divinely appointed role of naming the beasts and the birds in Genesis 2 reflects God’s naming of the elements of creation in Genesis 1. This naming culminates in the naming of the woman with poetic joy. The one-flesh union of Adam and Eve establishes the family unit. The complete goodness of creation in Genesis 1 is expressed in Genesis 2 by the innocence of man and woman, who are without clothing and feel no shame.

At the pinnacle of God’s creation, man and woman receive the gift of innocent, good, and abundant life. They speak face



Abundant Life

By Dr. Dean O. Wenthe

to face with God as they continue to live before Him. Their life mirrors the life of their Creator, for they are in His image. Their rich complexity across emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions reflects their origins in His personal creative action and underscores their remarkable significance and place. They are not the incidental or accidental product of impersonal forces, but are the very heart of God's work. The triumph of God's lavish grace in giving life to man and woman imparts such significance to their actions. Their lives are always before God.

The wonder and perfection of creation are also public. Even as civilization after civilization marvels over the majesty and beauty of the universe, their histories also show the unique place of humanity in His creation.

Life Lost and Restored

In commanding the man not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God confers upon him the freedom to choose against his Creator and against life itself. Man and woman refuse their life as creatures of God and instead seek to be like God. In doing so they reject God, who has given life freely and abundantly. At the heart of their choice is pride.

The rejection of God's creation is a rejection of life. Adam's life before God becomes a flight from God. His innocent delight in the woman is replaced with blame and strife. The very fabric of creation is torn. The world designed to nourish life now resists it.

Death quickly comes into the world of life when Cain, the firstborn of Adam and Eve, kills Abel, their second son. Now the litany of death, "and he died," marks the genealogies of Genesis 5 and Genesis 10. The chronicle of these generations before and after the flood shows the increasingly short and fragile character of life.

But God's great promise of Genesis 3:15 is that the seed of the woman shall one day reverse the curse of death, which the serpent's deception had brought upon Adam and Eve and their descendants.

The early chapters of Genesis demonstrate God's gracious will to restore life. God gives Seth in the place of Abel. God's communion with Enoch leads Him to take Enoch to Himself without death.

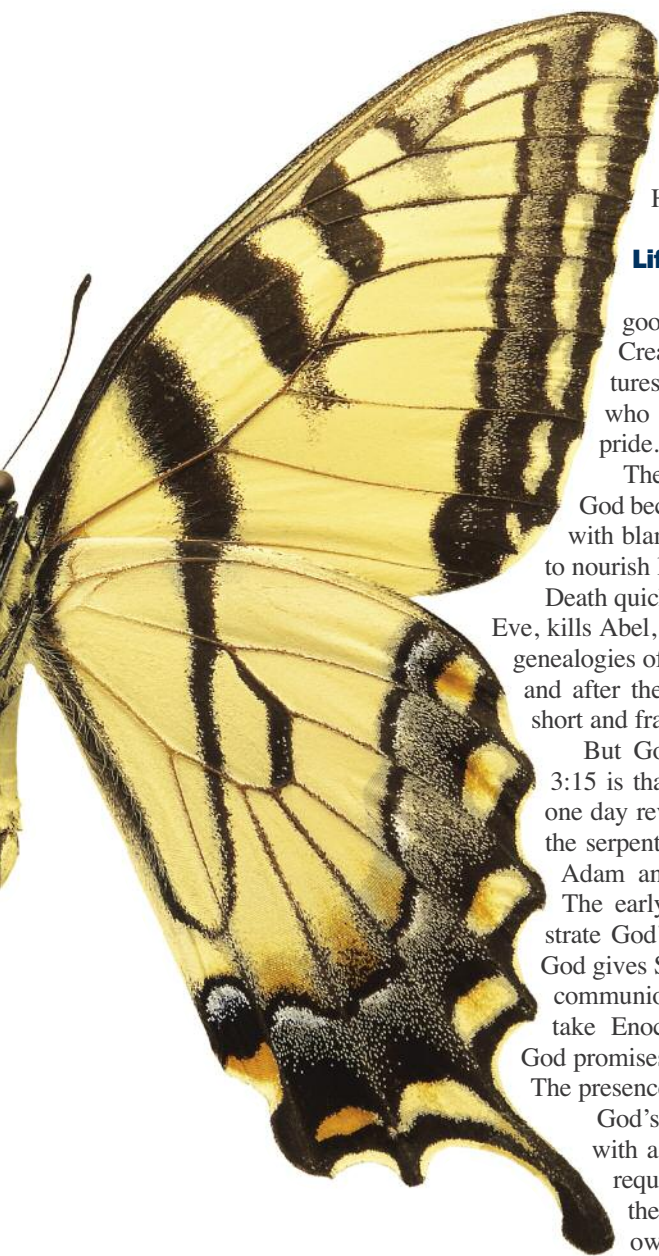
God promises that in the seed of Abram all the nations of the earth will be blessed. The presence of blessing echoes the blessing of creation and promises life.

God's gracious presence does require sacrifice. The holy God can only dwell with a purified people. The presence of the glory of God in the tabernacle requires that a sacrificial system be in place. When the high priest enters the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he offers sacrifice for his own sins. But God's guidance and protection of the patriarchs, His deliverance of Abraham's children from Egypt, and His sustenance of the people

in the wilderness display His gracious will that the redemptive seed be born to the children of Abraham.

The theme of restoration to life through God's gracious presence is the center of worship in the Pentateuch. The offering of Abel, the altars of the patriarchs, and the sacrificial system of Leviticus all show that worship is the restoration of a relationship with God. Here He bestows His presence. Christian worship today confesses that Christ's presence in Word, water, wine, and bread restores life through His holy sacrifice.

If Christian vision ever becomes blurred, faith in Christ again pierces the darkness with His light and life. His life calls His faithful to confess the infinite significance and sanctity of all human life, which originates in the holiness of its Creator.



The Pentateuch begins with a loss of place as man and woman are driven from the garden, but it concludes with a restoration of place. God fulfills His promise to Abraham by giving the promised land to His descendants. The gift of land is a gift of life before God. Adam rebelled, but Abraham's offspring are directed to live in accord with God's holy will. He has delivered the people for life in His presence. This relationship with God is the very source of life. God through Moses confronts the people with the clear choice between life or death.

The Pentateuch ends as it begins—with God's blessing. The prospect of life before God in the place He has provided shows God's enduring will to save His people from death and restore them to life. This will, like God's creative work, is an expression of His merciful and gracious character.

The prophetic literature of Israel records how Israel again chooses death rather than life. Turning from God to Baal is choosing death. Yet the steadfast will of God to restore life to those who confess Him as Creator and Savior is clear. A Son shall be born to Abraham's line and to David's line who will establish an everlasting kingdom. Isaiah sees a day when the work of this Child restores God's people to life. This confidence and trust in God to restore life also is reflected in the worship of Israel.

Real Life in Christ

The Scriptural description of the origin and cause of death is crucial for a correct understanding of life. Real life is given and sustained by God. To deny God is to embrace death. To assert a life independent from God is to repeat Adam and Eve's attempt to be like God. Now, as then, it brings decay and death.

This understanding of life is at the heart also of the New Testament. The birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, brings real life to the entire human race. He assumes human flesh that He might restore all humanity to life. His incarnation leads to the cross so that all might have eternal life in Him. Again, as at creation, God freely and fully bestows life. In the gift of His Son, real life before and with Him can be restored to His people now and forever. Jesus announces real life: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die" (John 11:25).

Real life is available only in and through Christ. Without His resurrection, death would have hopelessly covered all history. But Christ has been raised from the dead, and all who are in Him have been restored to real life.

Real life begins in Holy baptism, in which God's Word in and with the water joins the child or adult to Christ's death and resurrection. The prophetic and apostolic Scriptures are the living voice of Jesus, which nourishes and guides the life of His people toward reunion with Him in the glorious presence of the living and holy Trinity. In the Lord's Supper, Christ is truly present under the bread and wine for His people's forgiveness and restoration to life. They participate in His life when they participate in His Supper. When those who have been baptized into Christ come together to hear

His Word and receive His very body and blood, they receive real life as a free gift. Christ bestows all His gifts upon those who are in Him. The Christian community is made truly alive by the presence of Christ through Word and Sacrament.

Because the Christian is joined to God, every present moment is shaped by the life of Christ. But Christ also has gone before to prepare a new heaven and a new earth, a place for real life to continue forever in His presence. Future eternal life, therefore, also is present in the Christ who conquered death.

Real Life in Christ: The Good and Abundant Life

In much of today's culture what so many call "really living" is often marked by carelessness and irresponsibility at the expense of other human lives. It reduces human beings to insignificance. Such lives are emptied of meaning and often end in despair. The defeat of death by Christ's resurrection, however, means that those who are joined to Christ now live before God in innocence and holiness. The real life is filled with the good gifts of the Creator. His Fatherly blessing attends them as it did Adam and Eve before the fall. The Holy Spirit comforts and sustains them.

The resurrection of Christ makes all of life significant. The Christian's days become a hymn of thanksgiving for real life in Christ. When pride and sin again threaten to bring death, the Christian flees to Christ for forgiveness and life. He receives the good and abundant life as a gift.

Real life in Christ means that the Christian can enjoy all of God's good gifts. Good literature, good art, good food, good recreation—all are made meaningful by the real life which Christ daily bestows.

Real and abundant life now and forever is God's free gift in Christ. Death is defeated. As Christians walk through a corrupt and dying world, they are called to embody real life, showing Christ to all who are dying. If Christian

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vision ever becomes blurred, faith in Christ again pierces the darkness with His light and life. His life calls His faithful to confess the infinite significance and sanctity of all human life, which originates in the holiness of its Creator. He who numbers the hairs of the heads of each of His children and watches over the birds of the air has made life precious. By the gift of His Son's life, every man and woman can be restored to real and abundant life in the blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.

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