

“The SID A4L Team knows that advocating for life means bringing the **message of Jesus Christ** to all people in all circumstances of life.”



By Cheryl Hemmer
Southern Illinois District Advocates for Life Team

If you have ever identified yourself as pro-life while talking with a pro-abortion advocate, you have likely been told that you are not really pro-life.

- ▶ “You don’t care about all life. You only care about life in the womb.”
- ▶ “You aren’t pro-life. You’re just anti-abortion.”
- ▶ “You don’t do anything for the lives of poor people or sick people or people of color or people from other countries or women or ...”

The list goes on. You could talk with them all day about poverty or health care or racism or immigration or sexism or ...

The day would likely still end with them thinking of you only as an anti-abortionist.

If we, the members of the Southern Illinois District Advocates for Life Team (SID A4L) are being honest, it is easy to see how some can come to that conclusion. It might be a valid complaint that pro-lifers, though unintentionally, do neglect the needs of other segments of society while focusing on trying to

protect the unborn. The pro-life movement, as a whole, spends the majority of its time, energy and resources fighting abortion. And in the few months it has been in existence, the SID A4L Team acknowledges it has done the same.

It is also reasonable, however, to expect that so much pro-life emphasis is placed on the value of the life of the unborn because it is such a clear-cut issue — the deliberate killing of

an innocent human life is wrong. With the number of lives at stake and the constantly changing legislature and landscape, it can seem like the more critical life issue. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. There is no argument to be made for lessening efforts to defend the lives of the unborn.

But the A4L Team also recognizes that being a pro-life advocate is not just about the protection of human life, but also the promotion of human dignity throughout life. Being pro-life is to believe that all human life regardless of size, age, race, gender, nationality, ability and socioeconomic status is a gift from God, has value and deserves respect.

The list of other life issues that the SID A4L hopes to address includes the care of the elderly, assisted suicide, euthanasia, end-of-life care, depression, mental health, suicide, poverty, hunger, homelessness, joblessness, genocide, sex trafficking, substance abuse, domestic violence, orphans and child abuse. This list is long, but not exhaustive. Defending the right to life and dignity for the weak, vulnerable and marginalized members of society seems endless. And while we do not pretend to have the solutions for these issues, we will endeavor to help those who are struggling with them.

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One of the results of the COVID-19 crisis is that the seriousness of many of these issues is gaining wide attention. The pandemic is reminding the pro-life movement — and the church — of the need to grease the other squeaky wheels.

As the coronavirus began to spread across the country in the spring, the elderly were identified as being the

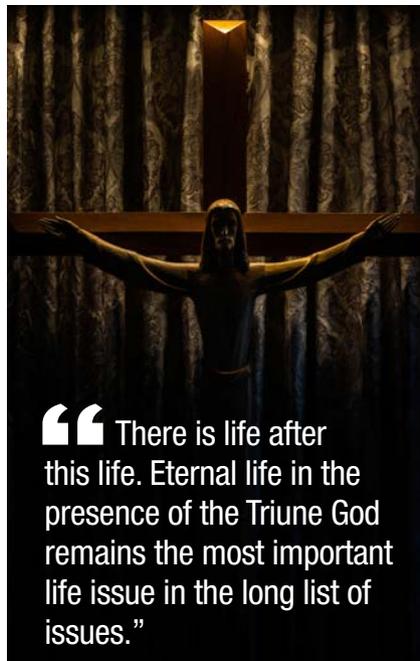


most vulnerable to the disease. So our country's senior citizens, many of them already isolated and lonely, had to become more isolated and lonely to protect themselves.

Soon after, it was not just the elderly who were isolated, but all of us fell under some type of stay-at-home order. We all became isolated from our extended family, our friends, our co-workers and our neighbors. We all felt some level of loneliness. And maybe we all got a small taste of what life is like for our elderly family members and neighbors. We have endured our isolation for months. Some of the elderly, infirmed or disabled will remain isolated long after the rest of us return to some semblance of normalcy.

The increased isolation and loneliness went on to raise awareness of mental-health issues, depression, trauma and grief. Calls to suicide hotlines have increased.

Workers have been furloughed or lost their jobs permanently. Businesses large and small have closed. Friends and strangers are wondering aloud where their next meal will come from, how they will make their mortgage or rent payments, and if they can afford



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medicines next month.

Reports of domestic violence and child abuse have increased. Drug and alcohol abuse is on the rise. This list of pandemic issues is also long and also not exhaustive.

But these issues are not just issues during a pandemic. They were here before the pandemic was and they will still be here afterward. The church has worked throughout history to help people in need. As Christians, we believe that we are called to love and serve our neighbor. There is no shortage of opportunities to care for our neighbor, to show them love or to help meet their physical needs. We know that our neighbor is not just the unborn. Our neighbor is every one of us.

COVID-19 has also caused many of us to look at our own mortality. As children of the one true God, we have nothing to fear. We have the sure and certain promise that Christ died for our sins so that we will live eternally with Him. We know that He is coming again and when He does, His children will live with Him forever, free of all of these life issues.

But not all of our neighbors struggling with depression or addiction or economic loss know the promises of the risen Savior. The SID A4L Team knows that advocating for life means bringing the message of Jesus Christ to all people in all circumstances of life.

As pro-life Christians, our concern is not only with the physical life or the quality of life of our neighbors. In fact, those are secondary to our concern for their spiritual life. There is life after this life. Eternal life in the presence of the Triune God remains the most important life issue in the long list of issues.

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