PRO-LIFE ISSUES

HUNGER GAMES LIBBY:

Okay, now tell me why society should let you live.

KAI: What kind of reasons do you need?

HUNGER GAMES LIBBY:

What do you bring to the table? Are you famous? Rich? A genius? Or are you smelly, diseased and annoying?

KAI: How about, I'm a unique human being with unique DNA and inherent dignity and worth.

HUNGER GAMES LIBBY:

Oh, please. That stopped being a valid reason for existence ages ago.

KAI: No!

KAI: Lucky I don't have to prove my worth to you, Mr. Cuddles.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

LIBBY: Hi, and welcome to Catholic Central. I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And today we're talking about the issues that fall under the umbrella of pro-life.

KAI: I'll just sum it up: Catholics care about the beginning, the end, and everything in between. I think we're done here.

LIBBY: No. OK, let's dive in a little deeper. Living a committed, pro-life worldview is a beautiful, yet challenging, path. Caring about the beginning, middle, and end is what Catholics call a consistent ethic of life.

KAI: A consistent ethic of life holds that there is a sacredness within all human lives that goes deeper than our physical existence, and that there is a purpose and meaning to be found in every stage of life.

LIBBY: That means that at the foundational level the Church stands in opposition to all direct taking of life.

KAI: This includes abortion and euthanasia, but also the death penalty and the direct targeting of civilian populations in war.

LIBBY: But a consistent ethic of life also addresses social issues and condemns things that devalue human life.

KAI: Or, according to the Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*, whatever violates the integrity of the human person.

LIBBY: And whatever insults human dignity.

KAI: So that includes torture, arbitrary imprisonment, abuse of the environment, lack of access to healthcare.

VOICEOVER: Bingo.

LIBBY: As well as forced deportation, human trafficking, hunger, homelessness, and disgraceful working conditions.

KAI: The reason behind this is the fundamental belief that all lives are equal in dignity, no one is worth more than anyone else.

LIBBY: And Jesus commands us to treat everyone as we would want to be treated.

RICH GUY: Surely not those scurrilous, good for nothings, who steal from us upstanding citizens and drain our society.

LIBBY: Yes, Catholics believe that you and every other person is created by God, with an equally important life that should be protected in every aspect of society.

KAI: For Catholics, life issues are a matter of human rights. The lives of the vulnerable have to be defended, no matter how the current culture frames them.

LIBBY: Especially since history has proven that the lives labeled dispensable can change depending on who's in power.

KAI: So that includes the poor.

LIBBY: The disabled.

KAI: The homeless, the sick.

LIBBY: The marginalized, the bullied.

KAI: The immigrant, the refugee.

LIBBY: You get the idea? To be pro-life means believing that all the messy, stinky, sinful people mean as much to God as you do, you stinky, messy, sinful person.

KAI: We are called to speak up and give a hand to those less fortunate, as children of God.

LIBBY: Which brings us to some of the most vulnerable among us, the children of humans.

KAI: Right. The entire premise behind the pro-life worldview is to hold sacred every human life, from conception to its natural end. Catholics believe what science confirms. At the moment of conception, a human being begins its journey through all the uniquely human phases of life. Everything is in place: the genetics, the DNA, the building blocks that create a specific and unique physical and emotional human person.

LIBBY: Unlike any other cluster of cells in our bodies, a fertilized egg is on a specific journey to become an individualized human being. And Catholics believe that is a holy creation, a growing child, worthy of being protected.

KAI: Even before it can breathe on its own or feel pain.

LIBBY: For Catholics, it's the life itself that has value.

FEMINIST KAI:

Yeah, right. Everyone knows that Catholics are religious pro-birth so that they can control women and their bodies.

LIBBY: Okay. Abortion does get a lot of attention, but it's not about control at all.

KAI: As we said before, Catholics believe that a new life has the exact same value as its mother's life, and all other lives. And Catholics dedicate a lot of time and money to helping people throughout those lives.

LIBBY: Catholic groups are among the biggest groups of social services in the world, operating hospitals, schools, orphanages, shelters, soup kitchens, and supporting life in other ways.

KAI: But those aren't that controversial. So yada, yada, yada, lots of great moments of human triumph and fast forward to the end.

COMIC KAI: So, I said, "Euthanasia? What do I care what teens in Mongolia are up to?" Youth in Asia, Mongolia's in Asia. Anybody?

HECKLER: You're a racist. Get off the stage.

LIBBY: You died up there.

KAI: And without dignity. Which, by the way, is the opposite of what the Church wants for everyone. To die with dignity, naturally, and with as little suffering as possible.

LIBBY: Yes. And to be clear, the catechism of the Catholic Church clarifies that medical treatment can be refused or stopped.

KAI: That is basically to say that you can refuse overzealous treatment. It's the difference between the will to cause death and accepting the inability to impede it.

LIBBY: The Church clearly sees the sometimes complicated or painful circumstances and choices that disease and modern medicine lay before us.

KAI: Catholics believe that the person whose life is ending is a great value to the world up to their very last breath.

LIBBY: And even thought Catholics don't want anyone to suffer, they believe that suffering can have meaning.

KAI: Part of that meaning is having a community that enters alongside both the suffering and the caregivers.

LIBBY: The dying teach us compassion, patience, tenderness, selflessness, and prepare us to face our own end of life.

KAI: On that lighthearted note, let's remember that defending human rights takes effort. It's disruptive and demanding. In every stage of the human journey, Catholics realize that there can be complicated circumstances.

LIBBY: And recognize there is a fraught cultural history in which the Church did not always live up to its own guidelines, and still struggles to grow in integrity today.

KAI: But what we are talking about is the core of Catholic beliefs and human rights. Also, remember that applying Catholic teaching transcends politics.

LIBBY: While we can work towards having just laws, it goes beyond what is legal versus illegal.

KAI: A consistent ethic of life requires us to examine how we are supporting human dignity in our interactions every day, with everyone, especially those we disagree with.

LIBBY: Being Catholic does not require you to solve every social and economic ill all by yourself. Catholics are called to a deeper activism, love and action. If only everyone did their best with that, our culture would be transformed.

KAI: To sum up, respecting, upholding, and defending every human life from conception to its natural end is good news.

LIBBY: To paraphrase Flannery O'Connor, the life that's saved may be your own.

KAI: For Catholic Central, I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby.

KAI: Until next time, choose life.

LIBBY: And choose love.

KAI: For more on living a consistent ethic of life, go to our website, CatholicCentral.com.

LIBBY: And check out our episode on Catholic social teaching and be sure to hit Subscribe.

KAI: Do it.

LIBBY: Right now.

KAI: I dare you.

LIBBY: It's so good.

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