

## 5th WORLD-PRAYER-CONGRESS for LIFE in ROME

October 5 – 10, 2010

“And the Light Shines in the Darkness”

Liutenant Colonel [Rev. Fr.] JC Akpan

### “Spiritual Warfare: Implementing the Helpers Apostolate in Nigeria, Africa”

organized by HLI Austria: [www.hli.at](http://www.hli.at) Talks available at: [www.pro-life-congress.com](http://www.pro-life-congress.com)

*For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:11-12)*

#### I. Introduction

The biblical quotation above reveals the nature of our warfare. Spiritual warfare begins with the realisation that there are certain spirits motivating the happenings in this world. Satan and his fallen angels are wrecking havoc in different spheres of life. Unfortunately, sometimes we expend so much energy trying to fight evil in the physical realm, forgetting also to focus attention on the spiritual realm where everything is being manipulated. In this paper, I intend to show how the helpers of God's Precious Infants have made spiritual warfare their main focus in an effort to weaken the souls of abortionists. Their aim is to stop abortion in the spiritual realm. Their argument is that a woman would have committed spiritual abortion, by rejecting her child, before actually going for the physical abortion. Understanding the working of the phenomena shows that this is not a vain effort but an effective means of stamping out the evil of abortion. In this brief intervention, we shall examine the possibility of implementing this wonderful apostolate in Nigeria, Africa.

#### II. Explanation of Terms

It is important for us to understand the terminologies involved in this discussion. First and foremost when we talk about warfare, as a military man, it is very clear to me that it is an operation between enemies which as a matter of fact, it is a waging of war against an enemy or acts undertaken to destroy or undermine the strength of a perceived enemies, In this context, the battle line is drawn between the abortionists and the helpers' apostolate whose aim is to intervene (through prayers) for the lives of the innocent unborn babies.

From the Helpers handbook, the Helpers of God's Precious Infants is an organization established in New York in October 1989, on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, under the direction of its Executive Director, Monsignor Philip J. Reilly. The goal of the Helpers is to establish at every site where the unborn are unjustly killed, a presence of pure prayer so that a woman seeking an abortion can really hear a compassionate offer of help from a sidewalk counsellor. While the focus is on prayer, designated sidewalk counsellors speak gently to women entering the facility, offering literature which contains

available true help. In this way the Helpers create an occasion for God's grace to work. And God, for his part, does take advantage of the opportunity.

### **III. Aims of Helpers**

Among many other aspirations, helpers have the following noble aims:

1. To love the unborn child at death's hour. Their love and spiritual consolation, likened to being with Jesus at the foot of Calvary, could be the only love the baby might have experience in its short life.
2. To prick the conscience of the abortionists and their staff. As they see them waiting in prayers on their way to the abortion clinic, they are bound to become guilty of their action.
3. To pray for the abortionists and their staff for God's mercy in their lives for they do not know what they are doing.
4. To pray for the mothers of aborted baby, hoping for a last minute conversion and by so doing supporting spiritually the work of the pavement counsellors.

### **IV. The Nigerian Context**

In Nigeria pro-life organisation is rife and their activities cut across the country. Such activities could be located in places like Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, Jos and most of the major seminaries of the country. Pro-Life movement is gradually springing up in other locations and it might be worthy of note that both Christians and Moslems have welcome the movement.

Children are valued in Nigeria (Africa) and many marriages break up because of lack of them. In fact in Nigeria, children are considered as a gift from God, a blessing, the fruit of the womb (*Psalms 127:3-4*). Unfortunately, abortion still persists because of the socio-economic situation. Some of the women who consider abortion find themselves in relationships that are meant to alleviate their poverty. They stand in the queue of other children sharing in the meagre family resources. The child, conceived from such a relationship, is considered another mouth to feed. As a result, most girls simply terminate their pregnancy to save the family economic stress.

In addition, the culture of shame also persists. Women who conceive outside wedlock are said to have brought shame to their families. It is not surprising therefore, that even some couples who are contemplating marriage may abort a child before the wedding in order that the woman is considered a virgin.

Another aspect, worth considering is the fact that Abortion is not legalised in Nigeria. We thank God for the fact that babies are legally protected from this modern day holocaust. However, this constitutes another problem. The absence of clinics specifically devoted to abortions makes it difficult to know which clinic is performing an abortion or not. Consequently, countless abortions take place even in homes, placing the lives of the mothers at risk. Arguably, the number of abortions that take place in Nigeria every year may equal and even surpass those of some countries where the practice is legalised. The legislation against abortion is not sufficient to stop it. We need

the apostolate of helpers to deal with the issue at the spiritual realm.

The presence of PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION (PPF) and its activities in our country Nigeria and Africa as a whole is a serious issue to mention. PPF is rampaging throughout Nigeria with their destructive influence in promoting sexual immorality, making nonsense of African morality, which basically abhors abortion and family planning. They utilise the media and engage popular musicians, actors, comedians and even some health workers in their propaganda. At this stage, fighting the damages done to Nigerians by PPF is like facing a well armed soldier with a walking stick.

Generally speaking, whatever is called family planning is alien to us and as such not African. Africans still love large families. But with PPF campaigns, many Nigerians are now being subtly brainwashed to see children as diseases to be avoided at all costs, as a modern thing. It is PPF who teach Nigerians that four is crowd and as a result of their powerful unopposed radio/TV ads, many Nigerians now accept to use all forms of artificial family planning methods- the pills, "intrauterine device (IUDs), condoms and others.

## **V. Necessity of Helpers**

Helpers are still necessary notwithstanding the peculiarity of the Nigerian context:

1. Whether the location of an abortion is known or not does not pose a barrier to prayers. The fruits of prayers could be applied irrespective of time and space. We are familiar with the story of the Centurion in *Matthew 8:5-9*. The centurion believed that his servant could be healed from a distant. The prayers of helpers will reach out to the places where abortions are committed even if they are miles away.
2. The fact that most abortions are carried out clandestinely require spiritual warfare so that those places are discovered to face the full wrath of the law. Helpers united in prayers could make authorities sensitive to the evil that is taking place unchecked.
3. Prayer can bring about the conversion of the abortionists and the last minute conversion of women contemplating the evil of abortion. We often hear of conversion experiences taking place miraculously. I have an incident that took place in our military chaplaincy in Kaduna. During our usual prayers and observation of vigil for this intention, when a girl who was touched by our prayers came out and confessed that she was contemplating abortion because she was abandoned both by the man who impregnated her and her parents. Through divine intervention at that prayer session and our counseling, she changed her mind. The helpers cared for her until she delivered two bouncing children. Another example is the story of a couple who wanted to abort their third baby because they never wanted a third child but due to our presence in the chaplaincy, they changed their mind and kept the baby. Helpers must not come face to face with those they are praying for to facilitate a miracle. Conversion experiences could result from such prayers.

## **VI. Practical Considerations**

1. The consideration of helpers will be both spiritual and material, as they strive to provide facilities that will cater for the mother and child until birth. What the Helpers call "LIFE HOUSE". They may sound beyond the scope of their competence but the Nigerian context dictates this approach (*James 2:15-16*). Faith must be expressed in action.
2. The provision of effective counseling Centers is required to give the mothers of unborn babies the opportunity to evaluate their situation. Counseling is a practice that is almost non-existent in Nigeria. We need trained personnel, who can work with these women to know alternatives available to them apart from abortion.
3. Helpers' apostolate could be formed as prayer cells in the Parishes since there are no recognisable abortion clinics in Nigeria, and also to avoid the brutality of the law enforcement agents. Besides it will be unreasonable for helpers to form a prayer chain around a clinic simply because it is rumoured to be making abortion available. In a situation where the information turns out to be false, it will result to harassing staffs of the institution. If law enforcement agents are invited, the innocent helpers can find themselves in a difficult situation. It is therefore safe to locate such activities within the parish setting but in a manner that makes their existence clear. They could organize activities like Masses, vigils, etc. towards the fulfillment of their goals.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The ministry to the unborn babies is indispensable. The non-legalisation of abortion in Nigeria and many other African countries does not mean that abortions do not occur in reality. We need the ministry of helpers to ensure that unborn babies receive succour and the spiritual support of the Christian community in the last hours on earth. This is a privilege that even hardened criminals enjoy. The performance of abortion clandestinely, calls for intensive prayers to stop its eventual legalization and to touch the conscience of all those involved. Prayer does not respect time and space and also is irrespective of location. The Nigerian context may be different but the apostolate of helpers continues to be relevant.

I would like to end this discussion with a quotation from the book of *Proverbs 31: 8-9* which says "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Protect the rights of all those who are helpless. Speak for them and be a righteous judge. Protect the rights of the needy. Thank you.