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Life NEWS

www.lutheransforlife.org



Life Newsbytes

For the first time since 1974, the number of abortions performed in the United States has dropped below one million—926,190 for 2014. Even better news, longer term, is that abortion rates and ratios, which measure the general frequency of abortion and the likelihood that a pregnant woman will abort, are down to levels below what they were in 1973 ... In “Abortion Incidence and Service Availability in the United States, 2014” (Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, March 2017), Guttmacher Institute authors Rachel Jones and Jenna Jerman estimate that there were 926,190 abortions performed in the U.S. in 2014. The Guttmacher Institute also says that there were just 14.6 abortions for every thousand women aged 15-44 as of July 1, 2014, of that year (the abortion rate) and indicates that there were 18.8 abortions for every 100 pregnancies ending in abortion or live births (the abortion ratio). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported similar declines in the number of abortions over the past couple of decades. These latest numbers from Guttmacher are a strong confirmation of a significant and enduring change in abortion practice and opinion in the United States. **Total abortion since 1973: 59,115,995.**

Find the full report from National Right to Life website: www.nrlc.org/uploads/communications/stateofabortion2017.pdf.

(CLR LifeWire, National Right to Life Committee, 2/9/17)

Speaking Up For Life

“Jesus, who was formed in the womb of Mary, who began life smaller than a grain of salt, grew ... became a newborn in the Bethlehem manger, and lived a sinless life to become a 33-year-old who hung on a cross outside of Jerusalem. He did this so that you might be saved from the power of the devil, so that you might receive the forgiveness of sins, and so that you might spend eternal life with Him in Paradise.” *Rev. Michael J. Schmidt, pastor at Peace Lutheran Church, Natoma, Kansas, and First Lutheran Church, Plainville, Kansas*

“We have some shocking news. ‘God became a speck, an embryo in a fallopian tube!’ ‘God was born!’ ‘God lived as a friend of sinners.’ ‘God embraced dirty, smelly sinners!’ ‘God suffered for unlovable and unloving sinners!’ ‘God died!’ ‘God rose again!’ ‘God wins!’ ‘Sin, death, Satan defeated!’ ‘God reigns over all!’ That’s the most positive and powerful, shocking For Life news I can think of.” *Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb, former executive director of Lutherans For Life*

www.lutheransforlife.org/media/life-quotes

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Life Will Win! by Rev. Michael W. Salemink

Lent leans forward. Lent looks ahead. The word “Lent” comes from an Old English name for the season of spring: *lente/lenctē/lengte*. This *lengthening* of daylight declares a theological truth. Melting clouds, warming air, softening soil, and romping fauna proclaim the Gospel. Life limited, tamed, overcame, and exiled death once again, at the command and by the hand of God. Everything that appeared dead was actually only hidden for a time, to draw death entirely out into the open, infiltrate behind the enemy lines, and enshroud it all in total dominion. So Christians, armed and moved by the Savior’s power, push back against sin and put death away in repentant Lententide.

“*Media vita in morte sumus,*” Christians of centuries past confessed. Reformation people echo it in chorale form from Luther: “In the very midst of life, snares of death surround us.” Death’s initially elegant tentacles have us surrounded, encircled, constricted. It advances in popular insistence on elective abortion, acceptance of physician-assisted suicide, undermining the dignity of those with disabilities, and experimenting on embryonic human beings. Surrogacy and sex trafficking reduce people to property in a society that already desires to possess those who please me and discard those who don’t.

Meanwhile our media cheerleads it, our government funds it, our courts vindicate it, our culture ridicules any who speak up in opposition, and our academics silence dissent via indoctrination. Worst of all, our sinful selfishness allowed and encouraged it all in the first place. Illnesses and accidents don’t really kill us; we’ve broken our bodies and the cosmos and brought it crashing down upon us.

So Jesus joins us there. He incarnates Himself and exposes God to us right where death is. He extends love and abides life among and within suffering sinners. Rather than sweeping aside the dying, He swallows it, pain and punishment and all. **God’s got death covered.** Love wins, a particular kind of love—forgiveness. Life wins, a particular kind of life—grace, unconditional and everlasting. In self-sacrifice, Jesus appropriates death itself to serve the purposes of God’s salvation. Every Good Friday must now give way to Easter morning, and resurrection always follows crucifixion. The Lamb once slain has become the Son risen again, and His ascension is scattering spores and sowing seeds of it all over. Father, Son, and Spirit make death fertile terrain. If we are limping, it’s only because He’s leaned us forward and choreographed a leap after every stumble.

In every sunrise and rainfall Christ is risen. Every inhalation and heartbeat happens because Christ is risen. His life wins as every berry bush balloons and every cornstalk stretches. His life wins when grass blades bend but do not break or sparrows sleep and then awake. Shelters stand and harvests heap because God’s love cultivates life, not just in spite of death but out of it. Bodies heal and victims survive because God’s love makes death labor as slave to life. Even winter arrives because the earth revolves because Christ is risen. **Death in all its degrees and disguises submits to the ways of faith that God’s Gospel Word works.**

In fact, He has enlisted us as antibodies. Yes, He has use for you and me in our scarred conditions. Our brokenness and bleeding out are redeemed and repurposed for delivering life into the worlds and hearts of our endangered neighbors. Whether they are culprits or casualties, Jesus takes us right where death is to shower His Word and shine His love. We get to speak Christ’s forgiveness and show God’s grace according to our station and vocation, in court and culture, in college and clinic, in comments and conversations, in laboratories and legislatures, at the front door or on the front page. We know life will win because Christ already has!