

Knitting is something grandmas do—or maybe moms, right? And hugging isn’t quite manly, is it? Yeah, sure, and abortion is a “women’s issue” and men have nothing to do with it. The fact is, every human life is knitted together by the hands of a heavenly Father, and every soul is held close by the arms of the Man who spread His out on the cross. Though many women fail to embrace their infants and too many men try to ignore them, Christ Jesus receives all as His children.

Knitting is something grandmas do—or maybe moms, right? And hugging isn’t quite manly, is it?!

At least that’s the stereotype. Years ago, Roosevelt Grier—okay, he goes by “Rosey”—a 300-pound former defensive tackle with the Rams and the New York Giants, famously used to do needle-point, but he’s the exception. I don’t remember my dad ever knitting. And men, well, you know how it is: at the family reunion when everybody’s greeting or saying goodbye and all the ladies are “Oh, it’s so good to see you” hugging, there’s always that little indecision for us—to hug or not to hug—and if we do, not too long.

Which probably helps us understand some of the dynamics of our text, Mark 10:13-16: **“And they were bringing children to [Jesus] that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.’ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.”**

“Hands that Knit—Arms that Hold” may be the theme for this year’s Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, but maybe it doesn’t sound much like me. I’m a man.

Now, we do have in our text others who might better fit the description—knitters or huggers, or, in our first case, *huggables*. Our text: **“And they were bringing *children* to [Jesus] that he might touch**

them” (v 13a). Children: the innocents in our story. You can picture them, can’t you? Adorable, cherubic—like in those old Renaissance paintings, not much on, pleasantly chubby. Playful. Walkers, toddlers, Luke’s parallel to our text says “even infants,” the Greek word *brephe*. They probably don’t sense all the fuss going on around them in our text.

Yet we know that children, while seemingly innocent, are sinful, are in desperate need of salvation. The little innocents aren’t innocent at all. The sin of Adam and Eve, passed down to every one of us since, means they need to be saved.

In our day, they need to be saved not only from sin itself, but even from the most devastating of all sin’s effects: death. And not just eventually like all of us, or even prematurely from accidents or illness or SIDS. They need to be saved from the very non-accidental taking of infant lives in the womb. In the United States, three thousand infants die *every day* by abortion. Little children, more than anyone, need arms to hold them, hug them. No one has more at stake in the whole issue of the sanctity of life than children, the unborn. But they don’t know it. Someone has to understand for them how much they have at stake.

That’s the job of moms, right? **“They were bringing children to [Jesus] that he might touch them**” (v 13a). The text doesn’t actually say who “they” were who were bringing babies to Jesus, but from our own everyday experiences, we have a good guess, right? It’s probably women, right? It’s always moms who are the best advocates for their children. Remember how mom stuck up for you?!! You know how your wife goes to bat for your kids! When the homework was piling up unreasonably, mom talked to your teacher. When you were running a fever, mom took off work, set you up on the couch so you could watch TV while you were home from school, and brought you ice cream. And when your baby cried at night, who got up and nursed and rocked and paced and rocked and finally laid him back in the crib—

maybe even covered him up with a baby blanket she’d knitted?

Sometimes now days we see “helicopter moms”—always hovering over their kids, ready to swoop down at the slightest amiss. That’s not really so good. But the moms in our text are doing exactly what we’d expect moms to do: bring their children to Jesus to have Him bless them. Moms always want what’s best for their kids. If anyone’s going to give one of those huggables a hug, take a child in arms, surely it’ll be mom . . .

. . . we’d think! Shockingly, sometimes today we also see quite the opposite: mothers forgetting their God-given responsibility to care for their children—or being driven by fear or guilt or tragic misinformation to flee from their responsibility. You have to believe—certainly we want to believe—that no mother would kill her unborn child if she were allowed to see clearly what she’s doing. But women are being told, “It’s just your own body; what’s inside is just ‘pregnancy tissue.’ ” Women, moms, are being told they don’t necessarily have a stake in the sanctity of unborn lives—and one million mothers a year in the United States are buying it.

So, then, who will take up the mantel of the sanctity of human life—if babies can’t and too many women don’t? Men? Mercy! **“They were bringing children to [Jesus] that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them”** (v 13). That’s all we need to hear, isn’t it! Men behaving badly! “Caring for these children, that’s women’s work. We’re not knitters, huggers. Jesus has manlier business to attend. He’s got theology to teach, a kingdom to build, a staff of followers to manage.” I’ve got a career ladder to climb, bills to pay, buddies to impress with my conquests.

Abortion—that’s a women’s issue. Men wouldn’t care to be involved in decisions about whether children they’ve fathered are allowed to live. Men do the manly thing—take responsibility for their actions . . . by paying the bill for the abortionist. Men wouldn’t want to love and hug and raise a child.

That's not manly. Incredibly, many men don't take any stake in the sanctity of life. That's her problem.

“But when Jesus saw it, he . . . was . . . in . . . dignant! and said to them, ‘Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.’ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them” (vv 14-16). Jesus won't stand for ignoring these precious lives! Man that He is, He knows all about loving and caring for little ones.

He knows a Father who knits! Psalm 138: **“For you formed my inward parts; you *knitted* me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made”** (138:13-14a). Knitting is not just for grandmas, or even mothers. Every one of us—adorable toddler, teenage track star, single young professional, mother of three, hardworking dad, retired snowbird, bedridden widow, 300-pound defensive tackle, unborn infant—every one of us is knitted together by the heavenly Father while still in mother's womb. And He's been weaving the tapestry of our lives—every thread, every color, every day, every event, by hand—ever since. Hands that knit—a *Father's* hands that knit!

Yes, and the hands of a Father who knits, like the dexterity of a woman who links row after row of yarn with exquisite skill, shapes each body, soul, and spirit into something unique, beautiful. Every baby conceived—whatever the circumstances—is a miracle of God. A woman's life—whether it's the way she planned it or not—can be used by God to receive His goodness and witness to His love. Manly man, no matter how big and tough and macho stud you are, you're the same soul knitted together by the Father when you were a single cell in your mother's womb.

And who says it isn't manly to hug? Verse 16: **“And he [Jesus] *took [the children] in his arms and blessed them*”**(v 16a). No one is manlier than the Son of God. He did *the* manliest thing—took responsibility for all *our* actions! Jesus took all our sins upon Himself. All your sins—original sin that

condemns even the seemingly innocent baby, sins of sex outside of marriage, the sin of having an abortion, the sin of leaving women in the helplessness and despair that leads to abortion (that’s the sin of all of us who haven’t done everything we could to help!)—all our sins were forgiven when Jesus reached out His arms for you on the cross. You are forgiven!—and with that, you have *eternal* life—because of Jesus’ death.

Now the risen Christ embraces us—takes us in His arms and hugs us in baptism; pulls us to Himself in the words of absolution: “I,” Christ says through your pastor, “I forgive you all your sins”; He feeds us as His hungry children in the precious Sacrament of His Table. Arms that hold! Strong arms!—the arms of the Man and God, Jesus Christ. In Christ Jesus we have life—we all, men, women, children, all have the same life—knitted by the Father, pulled back, held close by Jesus in His death on the cross and His resurrection.

This means we all have a stake in preserving the sanctity of life. (*Here could be inserted opportunities for local involvement in pro-life activities.*) The unborn, the elderly, the weak, the sick need it. Women are most highly honored to bring it forth. Men, oh, yes, men: it’s ours to hug and hold and love!

Knitting isn’t just something moms and grandmas do, is it?! And hugging is so very manly! Abortion—just a “women’s issue”? Hah!

MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN ALL HAVE THE SAME STAKE IN THE SANCTITY OF LIFE,
BECAUSE ALL HAVE THE SAME LIFE—KNITTED TOGETHER BY THE FATHER
AND EMBRACED BY THE OUTSTRETCHED ARMS OF THE MAN, JESUS CHRIST.

Amen.