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Moore: Sanctity of human life takes priority during pandemic

by Tom Strode, posted Thursday, March 26, 2020 (one month ago)

WASHINGTON (BP) -- The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic "is no time to turn our eyes away from the sanctity of human life," Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore said in a column published Thursday (March 26) in *The New York Times*.

Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), wrote in response to recent suggestions from government officials and others "about weighing the value of human life against the health of the nation's economy and the strength of the stock market," he said in the column.

He acknowledged human beings are suffering from the economic disruption of layoffs and business closings in an effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus but wrote, "Still, each human life is more significant than a trillion-dollar gross national product. Stocks and bonds are important, yes, but human beings are created in the image of God."

Moore's column -- with the headline "God Doesn't Want Us to Sacrifice the Old" -- came after Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, also a Southern Baptist, implied March 23 many elderly Americans would be willing to risk COVID-19 infection to save the economy. President Trump expressed the next day his desire to restart the economy by Easter (April 12).



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The ERLC president also warned against recommendations that care for the "young and healthy" should take priority over care for the elderly and disabled.

"Such considerations turn human lives into checkmarks on a page rather than the sacred mystery they are," he wrote. "When we entertain these ideas, something of our very humanity is lost."

"[W]e must guard our consciences," Moore wrote. In a reference to the parable of the Good Samaritan, he said, "We cannot pass by on the side of the road when the elderly, disabled, the poor, and the vulnerable are in peril before our eyes. We want to hear the sound of cash registers again, but we cannot afford to hear them over the cries of those made in the image of God."

He added, "A life in a nursing home is a life worth living. A life in a hospital quarantine ward is a life worth living. The lives of our grandparents, the lives of the disabled, the lives of the terminally ill, these are all lives worth living."

Americans need their government to help during this time of social distancing and shelter-in-place mandates, and they need to heed the advice of public health specialists, Moore wrote.

"We must get back to work, get the economy back on its feet, but we can only do that when doing so will not kill the vulnerable and overwhelm our hospitals, our doctors, our nurses, and our communities," he wrote.

Moore's column was published two days after he joined more than 50 other pro-life leaders in a letter urging Alex Azar, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and other public health officials to act to prohibit the promotion of abortion during the pandemic. The letter said Planned Parenthood and other organizations are promoting and performing abortions while other elective procedures are being postponed.

Messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention have passed a series of resolutions during the last four decades in support of the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000, the convention's statement of faith, affirms the same view of the sanctity of human life.

Moore's column in *The Times* is available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/opinion/coronavirus-elderly-vulnerable-religion.html>.

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