



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Priests and People for Life – Part 2

Guest(s): Frank Pavone

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk, it's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to another edition of Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and hope you're having a blessed day today. The program you're about to hear is the second part of Dr. James Dobson's classic conversation with his guest, Frank Pavone. Frank was an official at the Vatican under Pope John Paul II and served in the priesthood from 1988 until 2022. Currently, Frank Pavone serves as the national director of Priests for Life. It's a position he's held since 1993. Priests for Life is a Christian nonprofit organization that educates and encourages clergy to share the pro-life message so that abortion becomes not only illegal but unthinkable.

What you're about to hear is included in our 2023 Broadcast Collection. If you enjoy Family Talk, then this 5-Disc-CD set will make an excellent edition to your home ministry library. You can order a copy over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. We'll be happy to send you one as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Again that's 877-732-6825. Or you can do online to drjamesdobson.org/2023. And keep in mind, you can also request this product, you can send us a question, or simply make a donation through the U.S. Mail. Our ministry mailing address is The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute or JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Okay, let's listen now to Dr. James Dobson and his good friend, Frank Pavone as they continue their conversation right here right now on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I referred to Cardinal Mueller who did an interview with Life Site News. I don't know if you're aware of that.

Frank Pavone: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Apparently, he said that he thought the decision was political. Do you agree with him?

Frank Pavone:

Yes. Well, I have experienced... Again, and this has been a 21-year battle. The political nature of it is the only way for it to make sense. Let me give one example that's pertinent here. Well, it was in 2011 the bishop that had authority over me as a priest said, "You've got to come back to the diocese." This is the diocese in Texas, Amarillo. He said, "You've got to come back. You can't be going around preaching and teaching and doing all this pro-life work. I want you back here." Now, the day that he asked me to report back strangely enough he got on a plane and flew to Brazil. That's an oddity in and of itself that he thought that this was so important, but I came back. I was obedient to that and he wanted me to stay there for a while and he said, "I need you to reflect on what it means to be a priest, and so on." Bottom line is I appealed to the Vatican at that point and I said, "I think this is a misuse of authority. It's hurting the ministry and my vocation and so on."

Okay. Vatican ended up ruling in my favor nine months later. They said, you can continue your work and the bishop calls me up and he says, "Okay, I give you permission without restriction to do your work." Now, here's the strange thing. One week later, he calls me into his office and he reverses himself completely and he says, "No, you can't do this work. You can't travel, you can't broadcast, you can't do any of this. You can't even celebrate mass in public." And I said, "Well, why? What's the reason?" And the only thing he could say was, "Well, there's an archbishop at the Vatican. Archbishop Morga told me I could not restore you permission to do this work." Now, he was in this office in the Vatican that takes care of priests. So I decided to fly to Rome and meet with the man, and I did. He gave me a meeting, I said, "Archbishop, did you tell the bishop that he couldn't give me permission to do my work?" You know what he said? "Oh no," he said, "I told him he should be generous in giving you permission to do your work."

What is going on here? Here we got the Vatican telling the bishop, let the priest do his work and the bishop telling the priest, no you can't do your work and it's like at that point I realized I couldn't trust this bishop anymore for whatever it was. There was something going on, whether it was someone else pulling the strings or what. There was something going on where somebody or some group of people in the church wanted to restrict this work. Because there was no understandable reason whatsoever why he was behaving the way he was.

Dr. James Dobson: You still don't know, do you?

Frank Pavone: No.

Dr. James Dobson: Frank, what is the origin of this great passion for unborn children? You're obviously not a parent, and yet you've given your life to the cause of protecting them. I admire you for that. Where does that come from? This is not just an assignment or a self-appointed purpose. This is something deep within your soul.

Frank Pavone: It really is, and as I've thought and prayed about this and experienced it over the years. Part of it is that I believe the grace of God leads us always to the people who are the weakest, the most marginalized, the smallest, those who need our help the most and just through my own relationship with Christ. I've often reflected on and been inspired by looking at His ministry and seeing how He always broke down the false barriers that people put up between each other because of prejudice or any other desire to exclude people or devalue them, and instead Jesus went to those on the fringes. So for example, the apostles were astonished that he was talking to the Samaritan woman, the Jews don't have anything to do with Samaritans and why is He doing this? People complained that he was eating with the tax collectors and the sinners. The lepers, instead of keeping the distance from the lepers people were supposed to do he went to them, touched them, healed them. Zacchaeus up in the tree, the blind Bartimaeus, "Oh, keep quiet. Keep quiet. No, no, son of David have pity on me."

And then He goes over and He heals them, and then the children. The people were bringing children to Jesus and the apostles, they thought they were so smart as, "Oh, leave the master alone. He can't be bothered." And Jesus said, "No, it's to them that the kingdom of God has come." So I've always been shaped by that, inspired by that to say okay, so who are the ones that society is putting up a false barrier against today? Who are the ones most excluded and discriminated against? It's obviously the children in the womb. I mean, this is the only group of people who not only are they discriminated against, they're considered non persons altogether. There's a gigantic blind spot.

Dr. James Dobson: They're the ultimate underdogs.

Frank Pavone: Yes. To the point where some of the very people in our society who are making it possible for the killing to continue in these abortion facilities are people who will stand up and will rightly so. I don't criticize them for doing this, but rightly so they will express their grief and their rage against gun violence, against the children are being separated from their parents at the border. They'll get up and they'll talk about helping the most defenseless in our society, and meanwhile they're just like, "Oh yeah, let's have abortion right up until birth." And they don't only agree with that they fight for it. So where does this passion I have for the unborn come from? Some of it comes from the utter dismay and frankly anger and also brokenheartedness over how these children who are clearly children, obviously human beings are being treated. It's the worst form of discrimination.

Dr. James Dobson: That leads me to the legislation that's just been considered in the House I believe, it may have been the Senate. You were there talking about the Born Alive legislation.

Frank Pavone: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: There's an example of it, that these children are born wounded from the attempt to abort them. Who knows what kind of pain they're in, and these people who support this are willing to see a newborn baby who will die if not given treatment, and yet they will let them lie on a porcelain table someplace all alone without a breast to comfort them. Without love, without anybody trying to ease their pain and give them life. That's amazing to me, and yet every single Democrat voted against that bill. It's an example of what you're talking about.

Frank Pavone: That's right. A lot of our fellow citizens, first of all can't even believe that this is real. What we're saying here, and we have a special website called bornalive.us if people want to see the actual documentation. I mean federal agencies as well as state governments are keeping track of these situations. Whereas you just described babies sometimes survive an abortion and they're not cared for, now they're outside the mother's womb. So we're no longer talking about a pregnancy, we're no longer talking about an unborn child. We're talking about a born baby and they're left to die or they are proactively killed.

Dr. James Dobson: They're certainly not talking about a woman's right to choose.

Frank Pavone: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: All of the arguments to support abortion fall apart in that situation.

Frank Pavone: Yeah, they do. Especially given the fact that we have in every one of the 50 states, the safe haven laws where that mom, even if she were told, "Hey, the baby survived." The mom could say, "Okay, bring the baby to the hospital or a fire station, the police station. I never want to see the baby again." And the law allows her to do that no questions asked. That's it, end of story, and yet still they want to have these babies killed. It doesn't make any sense. Now, there are some protections in the law for these children, and in fact President George W. Bush signed during his administration. Signed into law a bill that declared that these children are persons under the law, that at whatever stage of pregnancy they are born and for whatever reason. Even if it's surviving an abortion, they are now persons if they are outside the womb. But that law did not carry with it any specific requirements of what the doctor is supposed to do when that person is born or punishments if they don't do it.

What this new legislation is meant to do is simply to say, the doctor exercising his or her best medical judgment is to care for that child. Do something for the child, don't just leave the child on the table to die, and why Democrats down to a person will fail to see this and fail to want to advance the protection of these babies.

Dr. James Dobson: No compassion whatsoever.

Frank Pavone: No.

Dr. James Dobson: For the humanity that's suffering here with no one to help or care.

Frank Pavone: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: That breaks my heart, it really does.

Frank Pavone: It's barbaric. There was one Democrat Jim, one Democrat, Henry Cuellar from South Texas. He has sometimes voted pro-life over the years, and he did. The exception proves the rule, right? He was the lone member of the House of all the 200 and some odd Democrats that are in there. The only one who could bring himself to say, yeah I think we should expand protection for these babies.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the most egregious example of the wickedness, I just... Let me change the subject. You were assigned to the Vatican for a period of time I'm told.

Frank Pavone: I was.

Dr. James Dobson: When Pope John Paul was in office.

Frank Pavone: Those were beautiful years. He had just issued in 1995, a beautiful document called "The Gospel of Life" and it's a very biblically rooted document. If I can give another website, gospeloflife.org is where people can find this document and he talks about the gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of life. Because Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth and the life, the bread of life. I have come that they may have life." He identifies himself and his mission with life, and John Paul II laid this out in this beautiful document. It's the strongest statement of the Catholic Church's unbroken teaching against abortion, and so he had issued it in 1995. In 1997, I was asked to go to work there in Rome in the office which essentially is the pro-life office. It's called the Council for the Family and under John Paul II in those years there, 97 to 99 when I was there, pro-life was just flourishing in a whole new way.

Our ministry of Priests for Life was flourishing as it still is now, and John Paul was looking for all the different ways that we could encourage the church to be strong on this issue. So I would be there receiving leaders and bishops would be coming and pro-life groups would be coming, and they would have conferences and meet with John Paul II and learn better ways to defend life and advance pro-life legislation. It was a beautiful time and he was just such a great leader.

Dr. James Dobson: I don't know if you know it, but Chuck Colson and I were both asked to speak at a pontificate on the family. We spoke in the Senate building, that historic building and we were the first two evangelicals to ever speak in that setting. It was a really interesting thing, and I accepted that invitation to thank the Catholic Church for standing up for life when my church and the Protestants generally seem bored half to death with *Roe v. Wade* when it came along.

Frank Pavone: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: My own pastor never mentioned it, and I went there to say thank you for being a voice for the unborn child and there was a response to it.

Frank Pavone: I do remember that, when you and Chuck did that and that was much appreciated by all of us in the Catholic pro-life movement. In fact, I think on one of your visits to the Vatican you stayed in the little apartment that we have over there in Trastevere.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, I did.

Frank Pavone: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And the window wouldn't close and I nearly froze to death.

Frank Pavone: Oh, no. We still have that little apartment, by the way. We still have it. Yeah. But that kind of collaboration, that was one of the things when I was over there that we were really trying to foster and to this day. I believe that the pro-life movement provides one of the greatest arenas for this collaboration of Christians from across the body of Christ for the defense of human rights. In fact, that document I was referring to, "The Gospel of Life." John Paul issued that in March 1995 and only two months later in May, he issued another encyclical and it's very unusual that these kinds of documents come out in such a close proximity to each other. But the one he issued in May of 95 was on the theme of Christian unity, and I think he was purposely showing that the call to defend human life is also a call for Christians to come together to do precisely that. Because in the defense of the unborn, what we are really saying is Jesus is Lord.

If Jesus alone is Lord of human life, that means we're not. The mother isn't, the Father isn't, the doctor isn't, the government isn't, only Jesus is Lord of human life. So to be able to say human life is sacred is to say Jesus is Lord, and that's something that all Christians can say together.

Dr. James Dobson: We're out of time, let's end on a positive note. Tell me how you felt when *Roe v Wade* was struck down by the Supreme Court.

Frank Pavone: I was actually doing a live broadcast at that moment from the National Right to Life Convention, which was underway on that particular Friday morning, June the 24th.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you ever think you would live to see that happen?

Frank Pavone: Actually, I did. I had been preaching and teaching through my years with Priests for Life about the fact that we would see the victory. Because you know why? Because *Roe v. Wade* was built on such a fake foundation. It was so faulty, it was so poorly reasoned. It was so strongly opposed, even within the judicial system, the history, the medicine, it wasn't even a constitutional argument. All

the reasoning was so bad. I have been saying to people in the pro-life movement, "Don't be surprised that it got overturned. Be surprised that it took so long." But I was always telling the pro-life people, I said, "We're well within the historical window for a decision like this to be uprooted." Because on the question of segregation, it took the court 58 years to reverse that from *Plessy v. Ferguson* to *Brown v. Board of Education*, 58 years. This one took 49, I was like "Lord, thank you. This is a sign of your faithfulness to the people." I thought of all of our great colleagues, many of them friends of both you and me over the years, Nellie Gray and Joe Scheidler.

So I thought of all these people who have gone before us who laid the groundwork and labored with us to get this victory, and then a Norma McCorvey. The Jane Roe of *Roe v. Wade*, whom I knew very well and I was one of her spiritual guides. But also, I thought of this too, and you and I have both taught on this extensively over the years. The resiliency of our American form of government, that our system allows us to peacefully make such a big change in public policy. That this was the fruit of the work you and I and countless others have done over the years of motivating voters to elect pro-life candidates who would put the kind of judges in place who would make their decisions based not on some invented rights, but on the Constitution of the United States. This is exactly what happened. George W. Bush gave us Justice Alito, for example who wrote the decision, and then of course Donald Trump gave us the three justices who voted for this and he said just prior to the 2016 election.

He was asked, "Do you want to see *Roe v. Wade* reversed?" And his answer was, "If I get to put two or three justices on the Supreme Court, the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* will happen automatically." Because he knew the kind of justices he wanted. So I was thinking at that moment as I just felt that at the exaltation of joy, I was thinking of all these people and all that work that went into this and all the prayer and sacrifice that led to God revealing His faithfulness in giving us this victory.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, you served him during his term of in office, didn't you?

Frank Pavone: President Trump?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Frank Pavone: That's right. I was serving during both of his campaigns on the advisory boards for Catholic issues and for pro-life issues, and then during the administration too assisting in various ways with input on these issues.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you get criticism for doing that?

Frank Pavone: Yes. In these battles that we've been talking about with some of the bishops, yes. It got a lot of criticism, and I said to them ultimately again, "With all due respect, well would you have preferred not to have the most pro-life president

in our history? Would you have preferred different justices that would've kept *Roe v. Wade* in place?" Not just about abortion, but I've asked the leaders in the church, "Hey, what about the freedom of the church?" No, president did more for the freedom of the church than President Trump and we still have to unpack this quite a bit I think. But as you know well, along with that *Dobbs* decision we got some great decisions on religious freedom that have really shifted the direction of the court. So that this nonsense about excessive entanglement between church and state and this nonsense about you can't pray in public or have crosses on the property in the city or whatever it is.

We've turned a corner from that and we're going to see more and more flourishing of religious freedom. Again, thanks to the hard work of so many people electing the right people to public office to give us the kind of courts that are going to do the right thing.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you so much, Frank Pavone for being with me today and for your candid and straightforward answers and let me just say I don't care who likes it. You're going to always be called Father Frank for me.

Frank Pavone: Thank you, Jim. God bless you, thanks for having me and looking forward to continuing our work together.

Dr. James Dobson: God be with you, brother.

Frank Pavone: You too.

Roger Marsh: Well, Frank Pavone surely is a strong crusader for Christ. As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 16:13, remember to "Be on your guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous, be strong." You've been listening to the conclusion of part two of Dr. James Dobson's conversation with Frank Pavone right here on Family Talk. Keep in mind if you did miss part one of the conversation you can always hear it now on our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Now, I want to remind you before we leave today, that we are a listener supported broadcast outreach. Without your prayers and faithful financial support, quite frankly, we wouldn't be on the air. All through the month of December we are blessed to have a matching grant in place here at the JDFI. This grant comes from some very special friends of ours and because of their grant, your gift of any amount will be doubled. That's right, twice the impact to help us reach more people with encouragement and valuable resources. Won't you help us begin the new year with financial momentum? Your generosity will provide hope and encouragement to even more families in 2024. You can make a donation online at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, or you can call us at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Now for your convenience, you can send a gift through the U.S. Mail. Our ministry mailing address is The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute or JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, CO, the zip code, 80949.

I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the JDFI, we pray that you have a blessed and peaceful rest or your day.

Announcer:

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.