



A Pro-Life Religious Outreach Newspaper

Catholic Bishops Strengthen the Statement on Life Issues in Political Document

At their quarterly meeting in November, virtually all the U.S. Catholic bishops approved the document, *“Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States,”* which made clearer than earlier versions that the issues of abortion and euthanasia-- questions of life or death-- take priority over other political issues of lesser moral weight.

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn, NY, on Nov. 12 introduced the document for which he was responsible as the chairman of the bishops’ committee on Domestic Policy. He had led the document through extensive consultation among other committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The document states:

“Intrinsically evil actions... must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned. A prime example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia. In our nation, “abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others” (Living the Gospel of Life, no. 5). It is a mistake with grave moral consequences to treat the destruction of innocent human life merely as a matter of individual choice. A legal system that violates the basic right to life on the grounds of choice is fundamentally flawed. Similarly, direct threats to the sanctity and dignity of human life, such as human cloning and destructive research on human embryos, are also intrinsically evil. These must always be opposed....

“The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Direct attacks on innocent persons are never morally acceptable, at any stage or in any condition. In our society, human life is especially under direct attack from abortion. Other direct threats to the sanctity of human life include euthanasia, human cloning and the destruction of human embryos for research.”



Bishop DiMarzio

The document criticizes “a moral equivalence that makes no ethical distinctions between different kinds of issues involving human life and dignity.... The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many.”

Further, the statement strongly warns that Catholics who vote for candidates because they want to keep abortion legal, or who ignore the pro-abortion stance of a candidate and support him or her just because of party loyalty, are acting immorally. “A candidate’s position on a single issue that involves an intrinsic evil, such as support for legal abortion... may legitimately lead a voter to disqualify a candidate from receiving support.”

The document refers to the ‘moral framework for principled Catholic engagement in political life...[which] anchors the Catholic commitment to defend human life, from conception until natural death, in the fundamental moral obligation to respect the dignity of every person as a child of God. It unites us as a ‘people of life and for life’ (Evangelium Vitae, no. 6) pledged to build what

Pope John Paul II called a ‘culture of life,’ (Evangelium Vitae, no. 77). This culture of life begins with the preeminent obligation to protect innocent life from direct attack....”

Fr. Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, called on “priests to preach on its contents, on candidates to study its lessons, and on voters to heed its guidance.”

Cardinal Sean O’Malley of Boston pointed out that in previous documents, “there was always the fear that we were considering sort of a smorgasbord of issues, but without any prioritizing, or giving the impression that all issues are of equal value.” Cardinal O’Malley drew national attention when, in words to the Boston Globe, he criticized the Democratic Party for being “extremely insensitive to the Church’s position of the Gospel of Life in particular.” He commented that the support which Catholic voters in Massachusetts give to pro-abortion Democratic candidates “borders on scandal, as far as I’m concerned.”

President Bush Says Pro-Life Issues Are Central

In a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference in early February, President Bush stressed the importance of the contest between candidates who oppose abortion and those who support unlimited abortions at taxpayer expense.

“On the rights of the unborn--the most vulnerable among us--one side supports abortion-on-demand. You and I believe in the worth of every human being, the matchless joy of adoption, and the right to life.... On matters relating to America’s moral compass, we have defended human life,” the President told the assembly.

The President also stressed that the election would affect the kind of judges a president will nominate for the Supreme Court. “I say we need judges who respect our values, do not follow the political winds and reverse the plain meaning of our Constitution.

We need more judges like John Roberts and Sam Alito.”

Regarding the question of embryonic stem cell research, President Bush said he was proud that he kept the federal government from crossing an important moral line and allowing federal funding of new embryonic stem cell research involving the destruction of human life. “We believe that all human life is precious and deserves to be protected,” he said. Bush remarked that political critics of his policy thought his defense of life was short-sighted and harmful. “When I vetoed two bills that sought to use tax dollars to destroy human embryos, they called my decision ridiculous and scientifically naive, he said” But when scientists last November found a way to reprogram skin cells to be pluripotent cells capable of acting like embryonic stem cells, the president’s position was vindicated.

News Notes

Lawsuit Challenges Lack of Abortions in Colorado Catholic Hospital Merger

The Sisters of Charity Leavenworth Health System in Denver is acquiring majority control of two Denver hospitals by purchasing the interest in the hospital currently owned by Community First. The acquisition sparked a series of four lawsuits including one by Exempla Inc., which manages the hospitals against the state attorney who endorsed the sale. At issue will be the Sisters of Charity's policy of complying with Catholic teaching on moral matters, such as banning abortions in the two hospitals. Exempla claims the acquisition would result in the lack of abortion "services." Attorney General John Suthers said he found no "material change in the charitable purposes" of the hospitals and "no basis to challenge the transfer." The Catholic hospital is asking the judge to dismiss the lawsuit.

Colorado Family Institute president Jim Pfaff said the lawsuit is "preposterous," but that, "when it comes to making abortions available, supporters of abortion rights will bring out lawsuits and expensive media campaigns to fight to preserve the right of clinics and hospitals to perform abortions." He chastised Exempla's board for being more concerned about providing abortions than good health care.

Bill to Help Parents of Disabled Children Passed by Senate Committee

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee passed by unanimous consent the **Pre-natally and Post-natally Diagnosed Conditions Awareness Act** on February 27. This bill requires that families who receive a diagnosis of Down syndrome or any other condition pre-natally or up to a year after birth will be given pertinent information about the condition and connection with support services and networks that could offer assistance.

Since some 90% of children pre-natally diagnosed with Down syndrome are aborted, it is hoped the bill may help encourage parents to save the life of their disabled child. Unborn children with other conditions such as spina bifida, cystic fibrosis and dwarfism have similar percentages of abortion.

Senator Sam Brownback, who sponsored the bill, said, "It is difficult, sometimes overwhelming, for expecting parents to receive news that their unborn child may be born with a disability. This legislation will help parents receiving such news by supplying them with current and reliable information about the condition and connection with support services and networks that could offer assistance."

NRLC Applauds Senate Adoption of Vitter Amendment to Prohibit Abortion Coverage in Federal Indian Health Programs

The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) applauded the Senate's adoption on February 26 of an NRLC-backed amendment, sponsored by Senator David Vitter (R-LA), to permanently prohibit federal health programs for American Indians from providing abortions.

The Senate voted 52 to 42 to attach the pro-life provision to a bill (S. 1200) that would reauthorize and extensively revise the laws governing Indian health programs. In the House, which is expected to deal with Indian health legislation in the near future, a similar amendment has been proposed by Congressman Joe Pitts (R-PA)

NRLC Legislative Director Douglas Johnson commented, "We commend Senator Vitter for his leadership in attempting to close the door to future federal funding of abortion in federal Indian health programs. Now we have our work cut out for us in the House of Representatives, where we expect the Democratic leadership to try hard to block enactment of this pro-life language."

The federal government funds a number of health programs for American Indians, which cover over two million persons. During the 1970s, the federal Indian Health Service paid for abortion-on-demand in these programs. The funding of abortions has been blocked since the early 1980s, but the pro-life policy has depended on annual renewal of a pro-life provision (the Hyde Amendment) to an annual appropriations bill. In contrast, the Vitter Amendment, if enacted into law, would permanently prohibit the providing of abortions in Indian health programs (except if necessary to save the life of the mother, or in cases of rape or incest), whether or not the Hyde Amendment is renewed in any given year.

There were 43 Republicans and nine Democrats voted for the Vitter Amendment, while three Republicans, 37 Democrats, and two independents voted against it. Of the six senators who were absent, three were considered to be supporters of the amendment, including Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), who was one of four cosponsors of the Vitter Amendment.

Documentary Reveals World Underpopulation Crisis

On February 12, the documentary film "*Demographic Winter: the Decline of the Human Family*" was released under the sponsorship of several pro-life groups: Family Research Council, the Heritage Foundation, the World Congress of Families, and the Latin American Alliance for the Family.

According to demographer Philip Longman, quoted in the discussion of the film, "Worldwide, birthrates have declined by 50% in the past half-century. There are now 59 nations with 44% of the world's population with below replacement birthrates. A birthrate of 2.1 is needed to replace current population, but the European Union has a birthrate of just 1.3. By 2030, Europe is expected to have a shortfall of 20 million workers. In Russia, where abortion has been used for decades as a method of birth control, the nation is expected to lose one-third of its current population by 2050" For more information and about the film, see www.demographicwinter.com

Bulletin Inserts

May 4 – In a desperate attempt at rationalizing their support for abortion, some clergy in Schenectady, NY, held a ceremony to bless an abortion clinic as “sacred ground.” Pointing out the hypocrisy in this, Kathleen Gallagher of the New York Catholic Conference, said “For many years abortion proponents have been saying this is not a religious issue, you should keep religion out of this, and now all of a sudden they turn around and decide to bless an abortion clinic to gain respect for a procedure everybody knows is not worthy of respect.” *Albany Times Union*

May 11 – The mother of Tim Tebow, the 2007 Heisman Trophy winner, was advised to abort the unborn Tim because of a drug she needed to survive. She said “no” to death and “yes” to life, despite the anxiety and uncertainty involved. Had she exercised her “right to choose,” Tim would have been just another abortion statistic instead of a young man whose talent has brought joy to many. *LifeSite News.com*

May 18 – “Abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others.” (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 5) Without the right to life, all other rights are meaningless.

May 25 – On January 17, 2008, the biotech company Stemagen announced the first cloning of human embryos by fusing donated egg cells with DNA from skin cells of an adult man. When scientists clone human beings for research purposes, they fail to recognize that “the artificial creation of a human life for the sole purpose of her exploitation and destruction will always be gravely unethical” since it “sanctions the direct and explicit exploitation of one human being by another, in this case, the exploitation of the weak by the powerful.” Family Research Council, *Stem Cell Research, Cloning & Human Embryos*.

June 1 – “Every 38 seconds in America a woman lays her body down, feeling forced to choose abortion out of a lack of practical resources and emotional support. “Abortion is a reflection that we have not met the needs of women.” Feminists for Life, *Refuse to Choose*

June 8 – “Recognizing the inviolability of human embryos really does not depend on religion at all, but rather on an accurate understanding of where each of us originated and of the shared rights we all possess regardless of age, size, or state of dependency.” *The Ethics of Stem Cell Research*, Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D.

June 15 – In his encyclical, *The Gospel of Life*, Pope John Paul II compassionately spoke to women who have had an abortion, “The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. . .”

June 22 – “The Dutch have decided that killing is an acceptable answer to human suffering. While it started with just a few, that is the people who supposedly were at the end of life, it very quickly became the many, i.e. people with disabilities or those who wanted to die.” Wesley J. Smith, *The Southern Cross*, 5/12/05

June 29 – The Dutch euthanasia movement, not content with euthanasia for people who want to die, has moved on to creating guidelines for people who can’t decide to die so they can be empowered to receive this “good.” “The point is that killing that starts out as a right, soon becomes thought of as a good that all should share in.” Wesley Smith, *The Southern Cross*, 5/12/05

Suggested Prayers

May 4 – For women tempted by abortion, that they may realize their unborn child is a gift from God not to be rejected, we pray

May 11 – On this Mother’s Day, may women considering abortion turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance and strength to avoid this evil, we pray

May 18 – That those who make their living by promoting or performing abortions may see the destruction of human life they are causing and repent, we pray

May 25 – May this nation realize that the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” includes the unborn child, we pray

June 1 – For those who see life as a curse due to illness, age, or handicap that pro-life people may reach out to embrace them with love, we pray

June 8 – For those in the pro-life movement, that their faith and trust in the Lord may carry them through difficult times, we pray

June 15 – That fathers of unborn children threatened by abortion may seek to protect the life of their unborn child, we pray

June 22 – That all people of faith may realize they are called to proclaim the truth that God cherishes every life, born and unborn, we pray

June 29 – For those imprisoned in darkness by their belief in a woman’s “right” to abort her child may turn to the Lord for the light that can free them, we pray

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More News

Kentucky's Catholic Bishops Say Abortion is Priority Issue

In a joint letter, bishops of all four Kentucky dioceses called on Catholic citizens to make the abortion issue a priority in choosing candidates.

"Consistent with our nation's legal tradition, we hold that all human laws must be measured against the natural law engraved in our hearts by the Creator. Our religious beliefs affirm basic human rights and obligations that are essential to the fabric of our social life. In particular, respect for human life is numbered among those basic values that underpin the very foundation of civilization.... The recognition of abortion-on-demand as a legal situation that sanctions an intolerable moral evil calls for a response. A moral evil that negates a public good demands the exercise of a moral responsibility to limit and eliminate that evil," the letter stated.

To pro-abortion politicians who say they are "personally opposed" to abortion, but do nothing to implement that belief in public policy, the bishops said: "No one can be excepted from the logical step to translate moral opposition into effective strategies. If there is a lack of public consensus to effect full legal protection (for the unborn), no one can be excused from working toward creating consensus as a first step." Avoiding this, the bishops considered "an evasion," "a moral contraction," and "self-deception."

Pope Benedict & President Bush Call for Ban on Human Cloning

Pro-Life groups have been encouraged that both Pope Benedict XVI and President Bush have spoken out strongly about the need to ban human cloning.

The Pope, in a speech to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, condemned proposed research to clone human beings. He said that scientists must stop treating human life as "biological matter."

President Bush has recommended a bill to ban both reproductive and research-based cloning. In his State of the Union speech in January, he renewed his call for such legislation. "I will continue to push for a ban on the buying, selling, patenting or cloning of human life," he promised.

NRLC's legislative director, Douglas Johnson, has expressed concern that Democratic leaders in Congress will continue to push for bills that promote human cloning. **"The Congressional Democratic leadership, urged on by the biotech industry, has been intent on passing legislation that would pave the way for cloned human embryo farms,"** Johnson said. Pro-life representatives have so far been able to stop bills that have falsely claimed to be bans on human cloning, but were actually allowing large-scale cloning of human embryos for research.

National Right to Life supports the Weldon-Stupak Human Cloning Prohibition Act (H.R. 2564). Such legislation passed in the House in 2001 and 2003, but the Senate never acted on this bill. The Senate companion bill is the Brownback-Landrieu Human Cloning Prohibition Act (S.1036).

Pro-Life Maryland Candidate Dr. Harris Defeats Pro-Abortion Incumbent

Maryland Right to Life was delighted when state senator and medical doctor Dr. Andy Harris won the Republican nomination for Maryland's 1st Congressional District with a 12 point advantage over pro-abortion Wayne Gilchrist.

While a senator in the Maryland General Assembly, Harris sponsored several pro-life bills, including the 2004 Unborn Victims of Violence Act, (which would have granted legal recognition to unborn children killed by violent assault against their mothers), and measures to prohibit human cloning. He has been an articulate spokesman for adult stem cell research which does not destroy human embryos and is successful in producing treatments and cures.

"Maryland Right to Life (MRTL) volunteers worked hard on behalf of Senator Harris who has always been a champion for the rights of unborn babies and their mothers," said MRTL president Angela Martin.

NRLC political director Karen Cross said NRLC endorsed Harris because of "the strong stand that Dr. Andy Harris has taken on behalf of those members of our human family who are least able to protect themselves.... Dr. Harris is solidly pro-life and has been a strong pro-life leader in the Maryland State Senate. We appreciate his willingness to take up the fight for life in the U.S. House of Representatives." In contrast, she pointed out, Gilchrist "supports the current policy of abortion on demand."