



FOR LIFE

Volume 10, Issue 3

Third Quarter
2004

From the Director

Dear Friends,

This letter marks the sixteenth "From the Director" letter I have written since I became Pro Life Director four years ago, and it will be my last. I have resigned as Director of the Pro Life Office effective July 3rd due to increased family responsibilities. The administration of Catholic Charities Parish Services is actively interviewing for my successor and I am certain they will choose someone who will bring to this position gifts and talents that are needed at this time in our church and society. My part time office assistant, Hortense Murino, is also resigning her position at this time due to family obligations. Her position will be filled at the discretion of the new director.

It has been my privilege to serve the faithful of this diocese. This experience has been a challenging one, filled with tremendous opportunities to forge relationships with individuals and organizations that work to promote the dignity and sacredness of human life. My hope is that these conversations will continue forward as we grow in the realization that building a network of agencies and people working together mirrors the Gospel image of forming a community of one heart and soul.

The article presented in this issue of the newsletter entitled, "The Consistent Ethic of Life and the Pro Life Initiative," is a compilation of many great minds that have been edited together in one publication. Former directors, popes, cardinals, bishops' conferences, marketing initiatives, and prayerful reflections are the inspiration for its content. It is meant to serve as a guideline for thought and action as we forge the way for dignified and fruitful labor furthering the Reign of God on earth by forming a culture of life in our world.

The inserts in this edition grapple with several issues and events that are included under the pro-life

umbrella. Please note that the Respect Life Packets normally provided free of charge for October's Respect Life Month activities can now only be obtained by completing the order form and enclosing \$6.25 to cover cost, postage and handling. Order early so that parish planning can begin!

In closing, I would like to echo the words of the late Archbishop Oscar Romero. His words have inspired me and have given me great hope. It is my wish that these words embrace your hearts and give you the new life needed to continue the work of our compassionate and merciful Lord.

It helps now and then to step back and take the long view... We accomplish in our lifetimes only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is the Lord's work.

Nothing we do is complete. No one sermon says all that should be said. No one prayer fully expresses our faith. No one reconciliation brings perfection. No one program accomplishes the mission. No one set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about, we plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond capabilities.

We cannot do everything. And yet, we must do something and do it very, very well. And although it may be incomplete, it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

And although we may never see the end results, we remain the workers, ministers, not Messiahs. We are prophets of a future that is not our own.

God's blessings to all!
Mary E. Collingwood

The question has been raised as to whether the denial of Holy Communion to some Catholics in political life is necessary because of their public support for abortion on demand. Given the wide range of circumstances involved in arriving at a prudential judgment on a matter of this seriousness, we recognize that such decisions rest with the individual bishop in accord with the established canonical and pastoral principles. Bishops can legitimately make different judgments on the most prudent course of pastoral action. Nevertheless, we all share an unequivocal commitment to protect human life and dignity and to preach the Gospel in difficult times. The polarizing tendencies of election-year politics can lead to circumstances in which Catholic teaching and sacramental practice can be misused for political ends...

--United States Bishops' Statement on "Catholics in Political Life"
June 18, 2004

The Consistent Ethic of Life and the Pro Life Initiative

Mary E. Collingwood, Editor

The Consistent Ethic of Life

Embracing a Consistent Ethic of Life in our daily lives requires an understanding of all our Catholic teachings and a willingness to respect the cycle of life in its entirety. It does not abandon the inviolability of life as a cornerstone of our faith; rather, it builds on that foundation.

It is a moral vision for addressing the full range of Respect Life issues by offering a framework by which all of these issues are linked in one “seamless garment of life.” This moral vision comes from the way in which all these issues are linked in one basic fundamental principle—the respect that is due to the dignity of human life. This principle is absolutely central to all Catholic Church teaching on moral issues.

The U.S. Bishops have formally adopted this Consistent Ethic of Life principle in their approach to the social and moral issues that surface within the public debates in the secular milieu of our political system. This principle is an effective instrument to allow the Bishops to speak on moral issues without making reference to candidates or political parties.

The Church has, what is called a “systematic” approach to theology and morality; that is, the teaching is always rooted in a set of basic principles and they are presented in a way that draws out their respective meanings and their mutual relationships.

This teaching is also called “analogical” which means that the Church can address a wide range of issues, using the same moral principles, and at the same time recognize that the moral issues are not always identical. They will, however, share common features or characteristics. For example, abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, and the social issues of racism, poverty, and housing are all moral issues. They are not identical issues. Each must be approached differently, yet at the same time are fundamentally linked.

There are a series of critical linkages in the application of the Consistent Ethic of Life to public policy issues: the linkage due to the many social causes of the breakdown of family life and of moral values, and of such social issues as poverty and the despair of hopelessness; the linkage between abortion and the destruction of unborn human life and public policies that address the needs of pregnant women, newborn children, mothers, families, housing, and health care; the linkage between the life issues of abortion and euthanasia, and the broad social issues of social justice that address the needs of poor people, the homeless, those who are victims of economic depression, violence, or dislocation.

Abortion anchors CEL because the unborn child symbolizes the fundamental challenge that human life poses—the very vulnerability of the unborn tests our moral vision, for moral quality is measured by how we treat those who are without power, the weakest among us. Abortion weakens respect for life in other areas, such as

the drive to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide. All of these issues are similar in that all involve threats to human life. They must be approached differently in the design of political strategies to change the laws to meet the basic moral principles.

The ultimate disclosure then is that without having a reverence for my own life, without being assured and confident about myself, I cannot make decisions that respect the dignity of life present in other persons. I will not realize it, nor will I act with any modicum of reverence toward their lives or my own. Unless someone knows their own worth as a person, they cannot choose the same for someone else because they don't know what it looks like or feels like to be loved, to feel secure, to be honored. The word “sacred” means nothing to them, because they haven't experienced what it means for themselves.

Application to Society

The fundamental determinant is to answer how, in the face of this issue of public morality, the public official is to translate moral conscience into public policy. One who appeals to moral conscience is to be evaluated in terms of how consistently they apply this to all the issues.

Consistency is the central key to CEL. The credibility of advocacy for any one issue is measured by a similar intensity on behalf of all the other issues related to human dignity. The viability of the principle of CEL depends on the consistency of its application, thereby adding strength to each issue.

Presently, our societal structures do not promote a quality of life that every human being deserves, simply by existing. Our society does not treat the weak and vulnerable as children of God.

Who are the people making the decisions to end the life of the unborn, the terminally ill, the elderly, death row inmates, the mentally retarded and disabled? Once identified, how can we touch their hearts to effect a conversion so that they embrace the truth about the sacredness of life? People will come to respect life when they themselves are shown love and respect—this will be the experience that will turn their hearts! It is our moral responsibility as Catholics to enable this kind of transformation within our society. A culture of life can only be realized if our living example reflects a love and respect for the sacredness and dignity of each individual human being.

We face multiple threats to the sacredness of life today and the Church is in a position to make a significant defense of life in a comprehensive and consistent manner. Success on any one of the issues threatening life requires a concern for the broader attitude in society about the respect for human life, which determines its policies and practices.

(Continued on page 3)

The Consistent Ethic of Life and the Pro Life Initiative (Continued from page 2)

It is quite clear that no one person, one approach, one ministry, or one teaching apart from other teachings contains the full truth. All have a portion of the truth, and all of it together reveals the love of God.

Words Remembered

On May 15, 1961, Pope John XXIII wrote his encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, "On the Recent Developments of the Social Question in Light of Christian Teaching." Note how relevant these words are to our present time:

If it is indeed difficult to apply teaching of any sort to concrete situations, it is even more so when one tries to put into practice the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding social affairs... Consequently, it is not enough for a person to be instructed, according to the teachings of the Church, on their obligation to act in a Christian manner in economic and social affairs. They must also be shown ways in which they can properly fulfill their duty in this regard... The teachings in regard to social matters for the most part are put into effect in the following three stages: first, the actual situation is examined; then, the situation is evaluated carefully in relation to these teachings; then only is it adapted to circumstances of time and place. However, when it comes to reducing these teachings to action, it sometimes happens that even sincere Catholic people have differing views. When this occurs they should take care to have and to show mutual esteem and regard, and to explore the extent to which they can work in cooperation among themselves. Thus they can in good time accomplish what necessity requires.

On April 11, 1963, John XXIII again states in *Pacem in Terris*: *All order, if it is to be qualified as reasonable and human, must be founded on truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom.*

And the often forgotten paragraph 23 from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's November 18, 1974 *Donum Vitae* states: *... (I)t is the task of law to pursue a reform of society and of conditions of life in all milieux, starting with the most deprived, so that always and everywhere it may be possible to give every child coming into this world a welcome worthy of a person. Help for families and for unmarried mothers, assured grants for children, a statute for illegitimate children and reasonable arrangements for adoption - a whole positive policy must be put into force so that there will always be a concrete, honorable and possible alternative to abortion.*

Method of Delivery

If we contend that every embryo and fetus to be born should be protected by civil law and supported by civil consensus, then our moral, political and economic responsibilities do not stop at the moment of birth. Right to life and quality of life complement each other in domestic social policy as well as foreign policy. Those who defend the right to life of the weakest among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the

powerless among us—the old, the young, the hungry, the homeless, the undocumented immigrant, those sitting on death row, the unemployed worker, and the victims of war-torn countries.

One cannot, with consistency claim to be pro-life if one applies the principle of the sanctity of life to one or more life issues, but rejects or ignores it in regard to others. Establishing balance between capital and labor, working against financial monopolies that restrict enterprise, condemning sexism, the arms race and systemic poverty, transforming structures that oppress the poor in capitalist countries, subsidizing housing programs, supporting education, and criticizing preemptive war policies are essentially, fundamentally and profoundly "pro-life" issues.

Stating our case in a style that is governed by maintaining civil courtesy while clearly articulating our religious convictions, being attentive in hearing another's point of view while being vigorous in stating our own, and by testing everyone's logic without questioning their motives is the current challenge before us.

All who participate in the public debate about abortion should speak and act in an honest, mutually respectful manner that can seek the truth and find a common ground by considering both the right of the unborn to life and the concerns of the pregnant woman. Ignoring either will not promote justice.

We need to point the way toward a public vision where issues can be understood as morally and politically interdependent. The capacity of faith to shed light on the concrete questions of personal and public life today is one way in which the value of the Gospel is assessed.

We must propose, rather than impose. We must evangelize, rather than proselytize. We must respond rather than react. We must establish a solid platform, knowing the positive, the negative, and the indifferent; we must build trust as we are building messages; and we must keep our balance.

Volume 10

Issue 3

For Life is a quarterly publication of the Pro Life Office, Catholic Charities Parish Services, Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, as an educational service for the people of this diocese.

The mission of the Pro Life Office is to proclaim the sanctity and value of human life as a gift from God and the foundation of human dignity, and work to ensure the quality of life at all stages of existence. This office encourages a Consistent Ethic of Life approach in promoting reverence for life, which is rooted in the Gospel and teachings of the Church.

Pro Life Office
7911 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44102
(216) 334-2965

www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/prolife



Notices . . .

The publication entitled, *Key Votes on Abortion: 108th Congress 2003* from the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment is available free of charge from the Pro Life Office. Limited supply. Please call 216-334-2965 to reserve a copy.

The 14th Annual Dr. John Carey Memorial AIDS Walk will be held on Sun., September 19, 2004, Edgewater Park. Registration 9-11 am., Walk begins at 11:15 am. Forms can be accessed online at www.cleveland.com/AIDSwalk. Call the hotline #:216-583-WALK to request forms. For further information, call Karen Auble at 216-621-0766, ext. 275, email: kauble@atfgc.org. Please inform her that you and/or your organization will walk and donate to the Carey Housing Project or the Open House Healing Touch Program, and designate your donations accordingly.

A flyer advertising the *R U 4 LIFE flag* is again included as an insert in this edition of For Life. This is one example of how parishes and organizations can display a sign of solidarity in supporting the inviolability and sacredness of human life. Please call Mary Feather at 330-678-3424, or email her at tefeather@netzero.com to secure a flag for your group.

Catholic Schools for Peace and Justice Network, in conjunction with *Cleveland Right to Life* are making plans for the upcoming Respect Life Month held in October. This will be another event where Catholic Students' Action for Life will be demonstrated. Please call Mr. Tim Evans at St. Ignatius High School, 216-651-0222, ext. 236, email: tevans@ignatius.edu, or Molly Smith at Cleveland Right to Life, 216-661-3000, ext. 11, email: mollyannsmith@comcast.net for further details.

Ministry of Consolation Training Conference, sponsored by Dept. for Marriage & Family Ministry and Catholic Cemeteries Assoc., Saturdays Oct. 2 and 9, 2004, 8:30 am. – 4:30 pm., Registration fee: \$100 (includes breakfast, lunch, snacks, handouts, and manual), Holy Martyrs Church, 3100 South Weymouth Rd., Medina, OH 44256. Call Terese Hardman, 216-334-2978, for registration materials before September 24, 2004.

Relationship Skills Workshop for Engaged Couples, sponsored by the Department for Marriage & Family Ministry, Sunday, July 18, 2004, 8:30 am. – 5:00 pm, St. Christopher Church, 20141 Detroit Rd., Rocky River 44116. Presenter: Michael F. Pavlak, PhD., licensed psychologist and marriage & family specialist. A two-hour follow up will be held on Thurs., July 29, 2004, 6:30 – 8:30 pm. at the same location. Fee: \$95/couple. Interested couples may call 216-334-2978 to register.

The Catholic Coalition of Parish Pro-Life Representatives invite all interested to join in their planning meeting for the second *Culture of Life Series*, Monday, August 2, 2004, at St. Christopher Church, 20141 Detroit Ave., Rocky River. Call 216-226-6663 for more info.

St. Clement Voice for Life will hold its 9th Annual Birthday Celebration in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Wed., Sept. 8, 2004 at 7:30 p.m., at St. Clement Church, 14505 Madison Ave., Lakewood. Call 216-226-6663 for more information.

The Diocesan Vocation Office will hold its 4th Annual Catholic Family Festival, *The Fest 2004: Expect a Miracle*, on Sunday, August 8, 2004, 3-10 p.m., at The Center for Pastoral Leadership, 28700 Euclid Ave., Wickliffe, with national bands, artists, food, games and fun. Call 440-943-7662 or e-mail: fest@a-full-life.com for further details.

**Pro Life Office
Catholic Diocese of Cleveland
7911 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44102**

NON-PROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 2323