



IV INTERNATIONAL PROLIFE CONGRESS Saturday November 7, 2009

Remarks on Behalf of Priests for Life By Fr. Frank Pavone

Christ, now raised from the dead, will never die again; death has no more power over Him! From the beginning of Christianity, his disciples have proclaimed, “Christ is Risen!” and have thereby announced the end of the kingdom of death and the inauguration of the new People of Life. As we read in *Evangelium Vitae*, “*The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel*”

The gift of eternal life which the Church proclaims presupposes the natural gift of human life itself. In our day, this most basic good and most fundamental right is under unprecedented attack, particularly by abortion, which claims the most defenseless human victims, and in greater numbers than any other form of violence.

The Biblical call to rescue the vulnerable and defend the defenseless, commits us to defend the lives of the poorest of the poor – the unborn – and of others whose very right to life is denied.

Thank God, countless ministries have arisen around the world to defend the unborn. Among the largest and most effective is Priests for Life. Based in the United States and serving the Church worldwide, this ministry has borne tremendous fruit in the battle for life. I have witnessed that fruit firsthand in many ways.

Knowing that the Church is the only entity with a divine guarantee that the gates of hell will not prevail against her, Priests for Life seeks to fully equip and activate the Church in the fight against abortion and euthanasia. We serve the clergy by networking them with one another, so that they can encourage and train each other in the best ways to preach, counsel, and mobilize their people on behalf of life. Bishops worldwide invite our pastoral team to speak to their priests. One diocese, for example, wrote to us and said, “*The response to your message was tremendous. In fact, never before have we had a uniformly positive response to anyone speaking to the entire priestly community here in our diocese. This is a first!*”

Dr. Bernard Nathanson, who helped start the abortion industry in the United States, expressed profound gratitude to Priests for Life, because he testifies that he and his colleagues succeeded only to the extent that they did not encounter an activated and mobilized pro-life Church community!

Norma McCorvey, the Jane Roe of the Roe vs. Wade decision that legalized abortion in the United States, refers to Priests for Life as the catalyst that brought her into the Catholic Church!

Priests for Life trains not only priests, but mobilizes the laity directly, and forms them in the spirituality of being pro-life, training them to live as “Missionaries of the Gospel of Life.”

The world’s largest ministry for healing after abortion, Rachel’s Vineyard, operates under the auspices of Priests for Life and brings the peace and healing of Christ every day to families who have lost children to abortion. Moreover, Priests for Life, working together with Anglicans for Life, coordinates the world’s largest mobilization of women and men who bear public witness about their pain and healing after having their child killed by abortion. It is called the Silent No More Awareness Campaign.

These women, holding signs saying “I Regret My Abortion,” and the men holding signs that say “I Regret Lost Fatherhood,” gather at public rallies, speak in the media, testify in Churches, and share with individuals the stories of their redemption. These beacons of hope bring many people back to the Church, for they realize that if God can forgive these people for the sin of abortion, then he can forgive any other sin as well.

Priests for Life bears witness to the Gospel of Life in the media, having the world’s largest outreach on radio and television for the pro-life message. In the political arena as well, Priests for Life advances the teachings of the Magisterium about political responsibility, and has been called by political experts the most effective catalyst for Catholic political action.

Dr. Alveda King, niece of Martin Luther King, Jr., works full time on the Priests for Life pastoral staff. When asked if the pro-life marches remind her of the civil rights marches, she responds, “The pro-life movement IS the civil rights movement of today!”

Priests for Life has worked for many years with the Pontifical Council for the Family and is grateful for its leadership in defense of life. We will continue to join hands and hearts in this battle, as all of us form a collective and visible voice for the voiceless millions who have been killed and are yet in danger of being killed by abortion.

As Pope John Paul II declared in *Christifideles Laici*, “...[T]he common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights -- for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture -- is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition of all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination” (n.38) and as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said, “The greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion” (*Speech to National Prayer Breakfast, Washington DC, February 3, 1994*).

To quote *Evangelium Vitae* once more, “What is urgently called for is a general mobilization of consciences and a united ethical effort to activate a great campaign in support of life. All together, we must build a new culture of life”

FR. FRANK PAVONE is one of the most prominent pro-life leaders in the world. Originally from New York, he was ordained in 1988 by Cardinal John O'Connor. He is a priest of the Amarillo Diocese and serves full-time in pro-life leadership with his bishop's permission. In 1993, he became National Director of Priests for Life. He is also the President of the National Pro-life Religious Council, and the National Pastoral Director of Rachel's Vineyard, the world's largest ministry of healing after abortion. He travels throughout the country, to an average of four states every week, preaching and teaching against abortion. He produces programs regularly for religious and secular radio and television networks. He was asked by Mother Teresa to speak in India on the life issues, and has addressed the pro-life caucus of the United States House of Representatives. He has served as an official of the Pontifical Council for the Family at the Vatican, which coordinates the pro-life activities of the Catholic Church. He received the "Proudly Pro-life Award" by the National Right to Life Committee. Norma McCorvey, the "Jane Roe" of the Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade abortion decision, called Fr. Pavone "the catalyst that brought me into the Catholic Church."