

# PRIESTS FOR LIFE

## Gospel of Life Ministries

Assisting God's people to respond to the evils of abortion and euthanasia

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[www.priestsforlife.org](http://www.priestsforlife.org)

Number 1



*Fr. Frank prayed with activists at an abortion mill in Orlando in October. At least one baby was saved and Fr. Frank spoke with the abortionist and another mill worker.*

### A Joyful Season

“Each year you give us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed.” (Preface of Lent 1).

The purpose of Lent is succinctly expressed by this preface. Catechumens prepare for baptism into the paschal mystery. The faithful are reminded of their baptism, and will renew their baptismal vows at the Easter liturgy.

#### *Baptism and Life*

This baptismal focus is a life focus, and is illumined by Lenten readings as well as by the encyclical, The Gospel of Life.

Baptism initiates us into the eternal life Christ gives us. ‘Eternal’ does not only mean it never ends. It also refers to the “quality” of that life, namely, it is a share in the life of the Eternal God.

The baptized, therefore, are sons and daughters of God and are members of the Church, the People of Life (see Evangelium Vitae #79). The baptized have taken hold of the eternal life promised them (see Rom.6:4) and are already living it (*Gal 2:19-20; John 6:47*).

#### *Baptismal Choices*

The choices of the baptized are therefore to be shaped by their new identity (see Rom 6:6; Eph. 4:17-24). We see how Christ calls the Samaritan woman to repent as she accepts the waters of

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### The US Bishops' Document Faithful Citizenship

In the year prior to each Presidential election year, the US Bishops issue a document to review with Catholics their responsibility to be citizens active in the political process. In November of 2007 the bishops approved “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility”

Priests for Life welcomes the bishops’ statement. The Faithful Citizenship statements have always outlined the many important issues that relate to the ‘common good.’ Many of the previous statements have been criticized for failing to adequately distinguish the differences between the moral gravity of the various issues, and the distinction between policy and principle. The most recent statement, however, does more to highlight those distinctions.

We at Priests for Life echo the bishops’ call for a consistent ethic of life, properly understood, which begins with the proclamation that life is sacred and that the right to life can never be denied to a person, whether born or unborn. This ethic continues to call for the efforts of public officials and citizens alike to preserve and enhance the other fundamental rights of every person, such as religious liberty, and to protect the many goods that are to accompany life itself: education, health care, security, and many more.

The bishops’ statement calls us to avoid two extremes in considering these issues. One is to ignore the distinctions among the issues; the other is to ignore some of the issues when making the distinctions.

The bishops furthermore point out that as we participate in political parties, we are also called to change those parties wherever and whenever their positions fail to correspond to the demands of justice and the common good. In particular, we at Priests for Life call upon the Democratic Party to abandon its pro-abortion

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**This newsletter is available by email, along with a bi-weekly column written by Fr. Frank. Subscribe free of charge at [subscribe@priestsforlife.org](mailto:subscribe@priestsforlife.org).**

## A Joyful Season

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new life (see John 4:15-24). Lenten repentance is necessary so that God's people may more deeply become who they are. They are called to see their sins more clearly. Hence baptism is known as "illumination." The passage about the man born blind (John 9) is therefore a key Lenten passage (4th Sunday of Lent-A and optional Mass for 4th week of Lent).

*The "pro-choice" and "right to die" mentalities are two of those "empty promises" which are firmly rejected by the baptized.*

### Empty Promises

Anyone who makes the Lenten journey is called to be more alert to the attacks on human life and dignity around them. The people of life are called to reject sin and all the devil's works and empty promises (Renewal of Baptismal Promises, Easter Liturgy). The "pro-choice" and "right to die" mentalities are two of those "empty promises" which are firmly rejected by the baptized. A firm rejection of these positions is integral to repentance. Lent is the perfect time for us to call our congregations to a clearer understanding of why this is true, and to lead them to a deeper affirmation of life, both natural and eternal, in the celebration of the Paschal Mystery.

### Metanoia

Repentance, a key theme of Lent, is a changing of the mind, and with it one's life, away from the path of sin and toward a life of holiness. It is not possible to repent of a sin which one does not recognize or admit is a sin. During Lent, we ask to be delivered from such blindness, and to be forgiven even our hidden sins. The application to the abortion problem is clear when we consider that the injustice of this act has been proclaimed as a "right" and a legitimate "choice." Because such respectable elements of society as the Supreme Court, many medical associations, and even some Christian denominations, continue to call abortion a "right," many find it hard to recognize it as a wrong. Part of the purification of Lent involves the metanoia, the "change of mind," so necessary in this area.

### Penitential practices

The works of charity that constitute a fundamental form of penance can include reaching out to those in need of concrete assistance in their pregnancy. Volunteering at pregnancy resource centers is a perfect way to do this, as is the effort to make such centers better known in the community. A common fund could be established, for example, to purchase an ad in the paper or the Yellow Pages. Giving to such a fund is, in fact, helping the poorest of the poor.

To stand up in any way for the unborn child can be a penitential act, since it often brings unwarranted criticism, even from fellow worshipers who should be doing more themselves to end abortion.

This Lent, may the whole Church be strengthened in her mission to build the Culture of Life!

## The US Bishops' Document

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stance, recognizing that such a stance imperils and dilutes any progress that can be made on other issues.

We also want to emphasize in a particular way the call that the bishops make for Catholics to be involved in running for office and being active in political parties. This is completely consistent with a life of faith and worship. In fact, public service in political life is a vocation.

The statement, furthermore, explains 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.

The document does leave room for voting for a candidate who favors legal abortion if, for instance, the opposing candidate is even more pro-abortion than the one for whom the voter is voting.

The statement encourages Catholics to use voter education materials produced by their dioceses, and so do we. Unfortunately, many dioceses do not produce any voter guides or election-related materials. Priests for Life urges such dioceses to do so. The faithful, of course, are always free to produce and use other election-related material. This is consistent with the statement's call to be active in the political process and in political parties themselves.

Our commitment at Priests for Life is to make this document widely known, and to distribute it far and wide at our own expense. Moreover, we call upon priests to preach on its contents, on candidates to study its lessons, and on voters to heed its guidance.

### Quotes from the document:

"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)."

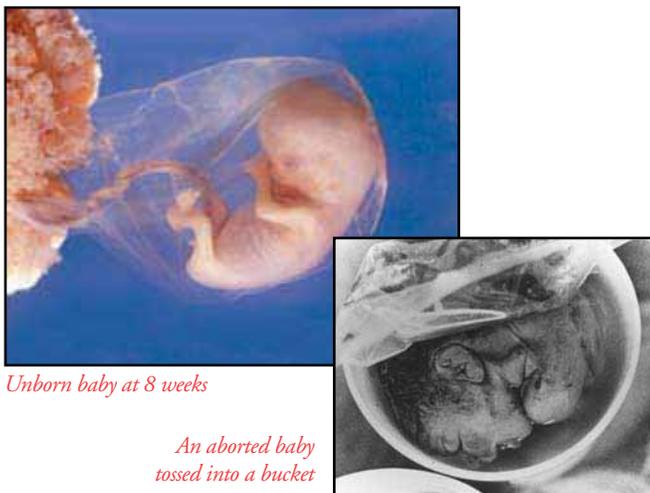
"Two temptations in public life can distort the Church's defense of human life and dignity:

The first is 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. It must always be opposed.

"The second is the misuse of these necessary moral distinctions as a way of dismissing or ignoring other serious threats to human life and dignity."

"Pope John Paul II explained the importance of being true to fundamental Church teachings: *Above all, the 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 for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.* (*Christifideles Laici*, no. 38)"

"This culture of life begins with the preeminent obligation to protect innocent life from direct attack and extends to defending life whenever it is threatened or diminished."



Unborn baby at 8 weeks

An aborted baby tossed into a bucket

## Frequently Asked Questions about Priests for Life

1. Does Priests for Life propose policies different than the policies dioceses already follow?

The role of Priests for Life is distinct from that of the hierarchy or the official structure of a diocese. Priests for Life is a movement which motivates, encourages, informs and equips the faithful to carry out the work of defending life.

As such, Priests for Life does not seek to set policy for a parish or a diocese. The role of deciding official policy belongs to the diocesan bishop and those to whom he entrusts particular responsibilities.

Priests for Life, on the other hand, is a resource of expertise, information, networking, and pastoral experience on various dimensions of the pro-life effort. Many dioceses use our information in forming and implementing their policies. We gladly share the insights and resources we have. And we expect to be part of the conversation in which we are all engaged as we try, together as one Church, to chart the best course and find the most effective means of building a culture of life.

2. Even though Priests for Life doesn't endorse candidates, doesn't it favor the Republicans?

Priests for Life proclaims the Gospel of Life and the demands that Gospel makes on public policy. That message is the same no matter what positions the national political parties take on life issues. Obviously, if one party takes a position against abortion and another takes a position for it, then pro-life teaching – whether enunciated by the bishops, by Priests for Life or by any other group, is, in effect, going to benefit the pro-life party. Yet that is because of the position the party takes, not because the pro-life groups choose to support that party.

Our primary spokesperson, Fr. Frank Pavone, is neither a Republican nor a Democrat, and serves as a resource to groups and public officials on both sides of the aisle.

3. What is the structural relationship between Priests for Life and Rachel's Vineyard?

The worldwide work of Rachel's Vineyard is a ministry of Priests for Life and operates under the umbrella of Priests for Life. The founders and directors of Rachel's Vineyard, Dr. Theresa and Kevin Burke, are employed by Priests for Life as full-time Pastoral

Associates. Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director of Priests for Life, serves as National Pastoral Director and Chairman of the Board of Rachel's Vineyard.

## Lenten Prayer Campaign

At [www.PrayerCampaign.org](http://www.PrayerCampaign.org), Priests for Life coordinates an ongoing international and interdenominational prayer campaign to end abortion. In addition to the ongoing "Daily Prayer to End Abortion," we post special prayers for various times and seasons of the year.

We have posted the following special prayer for the Lenten season which we invite all believers to say each day. The prayer can also be downloaded from [www.PrayerCampaign.org](http://www.PrayerCampaign.org), where people can also indicate that they are joining in this prayer effort.

### Lenten Pro-life Prayer

*Father of all mercy, we thank you for this season of grace and light. We know that sin has blinded us. Draw us ever closer to you, in prayer and penance. Since you, O God, are light itself, give all your people a clearer understanding of what is sin, and what is virtue. Grant in particular that we may see, as never before, the profound dignity of every human life, including the vulnerable unborn children. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## Prayer Intentions

*You are encouraged to remember the following intentions as you pray the Liturgy of the Hours:*

### JANUARY INTENTION:

That radio and television ministries will carry effective commentary on life issues.

### FEBRUARY INTENTION:

That Priests for Life may grow in the effectiveness and scope of its ministry.

## Stay Connected with us!

**Subscribe to our Email services:** Information and inspiration every two weeks from Fr. Frank Pavone: [subscribe@priestsforlife.org](mailto:subscribe@priestsforlife.org)

**Watch our TV Programs:** *Defending Life* on EWTN every Friday at 10pm ET (repeated Saturday at 2:30am).

*Gospel of Life* on Sky Angel's "Angel One" – see [www.GospelofLife.com](http://www.GospelofLife.com)

**Listen to our Radio Programs:** *Life on the Line* is on every weekend – See [www.LifeOntheLine.com](http://www.LifeOntheLine.com).

**Come to hear our speakers:** The schedule of our pastoral team is posted on our website at [www.priestsforlife.org/speakers](http://www.priestsforlife.org/speakers).

Please publicize this information in your parish bulletins and pro-life newsletters!

## Join Fr. Frank in the US Senate!

Coming to Washington DC for the March for Life? Join Fr. Frank Pavone in the US Senate for the National Memorial for the PreBorn and their Mothers and Fathers. This morning prayer service is interdenominational and will feature powerful singing and preaching to prepare you for the afternoon's march. The details of time and location are posted on [www.GospelofLife.com](http://www.GospelofLife.com).

